DRAFT

INITIAL STUDY
MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION

CALAVERAS BIG TREES STATE PARK
VISITOR CENTER PROJECT

July 2004

State of California
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION
Northern Service Center
One Capitol Mall – Suite 500
Sacramento, California 95814

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MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION

PROJECT: **VISITOR CENTER PROJECT**

LEAD AGENCY: California Department of Parks and Recreation

AVAILABILITY OF DOCUMENTS: The Initial Study for this Mitigated Negative Declaration is available for review at:

- Northern Service Center
  California Department of Parks & Recreation
  One Capitol Mall - Suite 410
  Sacramento, California 95814

- Central Valley District Headquarters – Calaveras Sector
  California Department of Parks & Recreation
  22708 Broadway Street
  Columbia, California 95310

- Calaveras Big Trees State Park
  1170 East Highway One
  Arnold, California 95223

- Calaveras County Library - Angels Camp Branch
  426 N. Main St.
  Angels Camp, California 95222

- Calaveras County Library – Arnold Branch
  1065 Blagen Rd
  Arnold, California 95223

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The Department of Parks and Recreation (California State Parks) proposes to construct a Visitor Center on the grounds of Calaveras Big Trees Stare Park. The following is a summary of the proposed work:

- Construct a permanent, accessible visitor center of approximately 7000 square feet;
- Install a new trailhead/assembly area adjacent the proposed visitor center;
- Improve the parking area to include four Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) spaces, including one van accessible space, 79 standards spaces and three bus parking spaces;
- Remove approximately four trees of no more than 30” diameter at breast height (dbh) to accommodate visitor center and utility placement;
- Provide utility connections to the new visitor center including water, sewer, electricity, telephone, environmental control, security/fire alarm, and telecommunications infrastructure; and
- Provide low-maintenance, native plant landscaping around visitor center, over trenching areas, adjacent to pathways, and all areas disturbed by construction.

A copy of the Initial Study is incorporated into this document. All comments regarding this environmental document may be submitted by regular mail, fax, or by e-mail.

Mailing Address:

Patricia DuMont
Environmental Coordinator
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Northern Service Center
One Capitol Mall - Suite 500
Sacramento, CA 95814

E-mail Address:

CEQANSC@parks.ca.gov

Fax Number:

(916) 445-9100

Submissions must be in writing and postmarked, or received by fax or email, no later than August 27, 2004. The originals of any faxed document must be received by regular mail within ten working days following the deadline for comments, along with proof of successful fax transmission.

Pursuant to Section 21082.1 of the California Environmental Quality Act, the California Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) has independently reviewed and analyzed the Initial Study and Negative Declaration for the proposed project and finds that these documents reflect the independent judgment of DPR. DPR, as lead agency, also confirms that the project mitigation measures detailed in these documents are feasible and will be implemented as stated in the Negative Declaration.

Original Signature on File _____ _____
Kathy Amann, Acting Deputy Director Date
DPR Service Center

Original Signature on File _____ _____
Scott Wassmund Date
District Superintendent

Original Signature on File _____ _____
Patricia DuMont Date
Environmental Coordinator

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND REGULATORY GUIDANCE

The Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) has been prepared by the California Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) to evaluate the potential environmental effects of the proposed Visitor Center Project at Calaveras Big Trees State Park, Calaveras County, California. This document has been prepared in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), Public Resources Code §21000 *et seq*., and the State CEQA Guidelines, California Code of Regulations (CCR) §15000 *et seq*.

An Initial Study is conducted by a lead agency to determine if a project may have a significant effect on the environment [CEQA Guidelines §15063(a)]. If there is substantial evidence that a project may have a significant effect on the environment, an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) must be prepared, in accordance with CEQA Guidelines §15064(a). However, if the lead agency determines that revisions in the project plans or proposals made by or agreed to by the applicant mitigate the potentially significant effects to a less-than-significant level, a Mitigated Negative Declaration may be prepared instead of an EIR [CEQA Guidelines §15070(b)]. The lead agency prepares a written statement describing the reasons a proposed project will not have a significant effect on the environment and, therefore, why an EIR need not be prepared. This IS/MND conforms to the content requirements under CEQA Guidelines §15071.

1.2 LEAD AGENCY

The lead agency is the public agency with primary approval authority over the proposed project. In accordance with CEQA Guidelines §15051(b)(1), "the lead agency will normally be an agency with general governmental powers, such as a city or county, rather than an agency with a single or limited purpose." The lead agency for the proposed project is DPR. The contact person for the lead agency is:

Michael Romo
Project Manager
California Department of Parks and Recreation
Northern Service Center
One Capital Mall, Suite 500
Sacramento, California 95814
916-445-8742

All comments regarding this environmental document may be submitted by regular mail, fax, or by e-mail. Questions or comments regarding this Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration should be submitted to:

Patricia DuMont
Environmental Coordinator
California Department of Parks and Recreation
Northern Service Center
One Capital Mall, Suite 500
Sacramento, California 95814

E-mail Address:
ceqansc@parks.ca.gov

Fax Number:
(916) 445-9100

Submissions must be postmarked, or received by fax or email, no later than August 27, 2004. The originals of any faxed document must be received by regular mail within ten working days following the deadline for comments along with proof of successful fax transmission.

1.3 PURPOSE AND DOCUMENT ORGANIZATION

The purpose of this document is to evaluate the potential environmental effects of the proposed Visitor Center Project at Calaveras Big Trees State Park. Mitigation measures have also been incorporated into the project to eliminate any potentially significant impacts or reduce them to a less-than-significant level.

This document is organized as follows:

- Chapter 1 - Introduction.
  This chapter provides an introduction to the project and describes the purpose and organization of this document.

- Chapter 2 - Project Description.
  This chapter describes the reasons for the project, scope of the project, and project objectives.

- Chapter 3 - Environmental Setting, Impacts, and Mitigation Measures.
  This chapter identifies the significance of potential environmental impacts, explains the environmental setting for each environmental issue, and evaluates the potential impacts identified in the CEQA Environmental (Initial Study) Checklist. Mitigation measures are incorporated, where appropriate, to reduce potentially significant impacts to a less-than-significant level.

- Chapter 4 - Mandatory Findings of Significance
  This chapter identifies and summarizes the overall significance of any potential impacts to natural and cultural resources, cumulative impacts, and impact to humans, as identified in the Initial Study.

- Chapter 5 - Summary of Mitigation Measures.

This chapter summarizes the mitigation measures incorporated into the project as a result of the Initial Study.

- Chapter 6 - References.
  This chapter identifies the references and sources used in the preparation of this IS/MND.

- Chapter 7 - Report Preparation
  This chapter provides a list of those involved in the preparation of this document.

1.4 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Chapter 3 of this document contains the Environmental (Initial Study) Checklist that identifies the potential environmental impacts (by environmental issue) and a brief discussion of each impact resulting from implementation of the proposed project. Based on the IS and supporting environmental analysis provided in this document, the proposed Visitor Center Project will result in less-than-significant impacts for the following issues: aesthetics, agricultural resources, air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, geology and soils, hazards and hazardous materials, hydrology and water quality, land use and planning, mineral resources, noise, population and housing, public services, recreation, transportation/traffic, and utilities and service systems.

In accordance with §15064(f) of the CEQA Guidelines, a MND shall be prepared if the proposed project will not have a significant effect on the environment after the inclusion of mitigation measures in the project. Based on the available project information and the environmental analysis presented in this document, there is no substantial evidence that, after the incorporation of mitigation measures, the proposed project will have a significant effect on the environment. It is proposed that a Mitigated Negative Declaration be adopted in accordance with the CEQA Guidelines.

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CHAPTER 2
PROJECT DESCRIPTION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) has been prepared by the California Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) to evaluate the potential environmental effects of the proposed Visitor Center Project at Calaveras Big Trees State Park, located in Calaveras County, California. The proposed project will construct a Visitor Center of approximately 7,000 square feet to house various interpretive and educational programs.

2.2 PROJECT LOCATION

Calaveras Big Trees SP is located off Highway 4 on the western slope of the Sierra Nevada and consists of 6,000 acres of forested land including groves of Sierra Redwoods and is bisected by the Stanislaus River.

The proposed visitor center site is approximately 350 feet east from the main park entrance station, situated adjacent to the current designated visitor parking area and is approximately 400 feet north of the existing Visitor Center between the North Grove Trailhead and the Campfire Center. The site is within walking distance of a day use picnic area and several overnight campgrounds. The location facilitates orientation and pedestrian flow to and from the North Grove Trailhead, the most-visited feature of the park.

2.3 BACKGROUND AND NEED FOR THE PROJECT

The building currently serving as a visitor center originated as a 400 square foot administrative office. In 1981, a 630 square foot exhibit room was added; two years later another 1,200 square feet containing an office, lecture room, library, and staff restroom. Park attendance averages over 150,000 visitors annually and is projected to increase; the park provides a significant educational and recreational experience for locals and tourists alike. With an increase in interpretive programs, volunteer support, and school participation, the existing structure is no longer adequate for current interpretive and educational program demands. The existing facility suffers from the following deficiencies:

- The location of the existing visitor center does not support its primary purpose of orientation and interpretation of the park. The center is not immediately visible to park visitors, as many as two thirds of the visitors overlook the center entirely and proceed to other areas of the park, losing the potential interpretive experience.
- The lack of a lobby area or a clear circulation pattern results in frequent congestion and awkwardness of movement in the building. Additionally, the building does not comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1992 (ADA) standards for accessibility.
- The exhibit room is too small for current displays with no potential for expansion.
- The interpretive programs have grown, increasing the need for more interpretive materials and the demand for a larger retail space.

- Limited space availability has necessitated that the library become a meeting, prep space and a general all-purpose room as well.
- The current restroom is available to staff only; there are no public facilities.
- Currently, the park slide file/archives are located off-site, making access to those collections difficult for researchers and staff.
- Space, such as offices, laboratory, and classroom, are either non-existent or too small for the function. The expanding educational program requires a classroom for programs involving local and area schools.
- Lighting, heating, ventilating and air conditioning systems are inadequate for current and projected program needs.
- The Park's slide file/archives and museum collections storage is located in a converted residence a half-mile away across the highway. This makes access to the collections difficult for both researchers and staff. There is no room in the existing building to house these collections because of the lack of extra space.

The proposed visitor center will provide an entry/reception area, with an adjacent gift shop and will feature a large exhibit hall for the orientation and education of visitors, school classes, and other groups, as well as a classroom, science lab, photographic storage, museum collection storage, work areas, and offices for operational staff. Public restrooms and a small staff toilet will be included as well.

The arrangement and availability of the spaces will address the major needs of the visitor center function in meeting the mission of California Department of Parks and Recreation to provide for the health, inspiration and education of the people of California. The building presently being used as a visitor center will be converted back to park administrative offices, which are currently housed in a small, historic farmhouse.

Without this project, the park will be left with an inadequate facility for orienting visitors, providing them with information and guidance, or enhancing their visits. There will be no convenient public restrooms. The visitor center will remain too small, too congested, too poorly arranged to suit the purpose, and finally inaccessible and in violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

2.4 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The mission of the California Department of Parks and Recreations is to provide for the health, inspiration, and education of the people of California by helping to preserve the state's extraordinary biological diversity, protecting its most valued natural and cultural resources, and creating opportunities for high-quality outdoor recreation.

The construction of a visitor center at Calaveras Big Trees State Park will enable the Park to meet its mission in terms of giving visitors an informative orientation and entry to the park, enhanced educational and recreational guidance and access to interpretive displays and classroom/lecture programs.

The primary objectives of the proposed project are to:

- Provide a recognizable location to begin the visitation process and establish a

"sense of place" to enhance the visitor experience. This will include entrance management, arrival, embarkation, and exiting.
- Create a logical visitation flow to allow for visitors to create their own or guided-learning experience about the resources of the park, including Information and guidance to these points. Allow for visitor independence when docents are not available to direct and inform them.
- Provide orientation, visitor services, and distribution and/or purchasing of related visitor information literature.
- Provide space for and produce new exhibits and interpretive experiences about and related to the "Big Trees" experience.

Secondary objectives of the proposed project are to:

- Provide space for staff and volunteers to organize, store, and perform preparation and restoration of artifacts.
- Provide public space for lectures, A/V presentations, meetings and docent training related to the Calaveras Big Trees Park.

2.5 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) proposes to construct a Visitor Center on the grounds of Calaveras Big Trees State Park. The scope of this project includes the provision of a new visitor center with connections to existing utility systems and the enhancement of existing visitor amenities through minor changes, additions and improvement.

Visitor Center architectural design concepts will be compatible and in compliance with the Calaveras Big Trees State Park General Plan 1990. In addition, the building guidelines will abide by, provide, and emphasize energy conservation and natural resources; accessibility; a design character that will reflect "Sierra Mountain" architecture while complimenting the existing "rustic style" of the Civilian Conservation Corps buildings; and create a balanced design between the building and the surrounding site features, terrain, and appearance.

The Visitor Center design character, scale and detail will be implemented and enhanced by the use of natural materials similar in color and texture to the local environment. The overall scale and shape of the facility will take advantage of the open, sloping meadow site that is formed by the forest on three sides.

Environmental conditions in the building will be controlled to protect artifacts and provide a comfortable environmental for visitors and staff. A security/fire alarm system will be installed to protect the building as well as the surrounding environment. The new building design will meet or exceed fire, life and safety standards; access compliance regulations; and seismic design standards, in compliance with the California Building Code.

The following is a summary of the proposed work:

- Construct a permanent, accessible visitor center of approximately 7000 square feet. The proposed visitor center will involve two separate enclosed spaces separated by

an open space with a partially covered connecting canopy constructed on one level with slightly varying floor heights due to site constrictions and the slope of the area.

- One, approximately 5,000 square feet "main" structure located just south and within 25 feet of the adjacent existing visitor parking will incorporate the following functions:
  - Orientation Lobby
  - Information Counter and Gift Shop
  - Audio/Visual Experience and Presentation Area
  - Interpretive Exhibit Gallery
  - Public Restrooms
  - Administrative Office Space with Docent Workrooms
  - Library and Archives Spaces
  - Utility and Janitorial Service compartments

- Separated from the main interpretive building by a connecting entrance canopy, the approximately 1,600 square feet auxiliary interpretive building is intended to provide the following functions:
  - Meeting/Lecture/Presentation Classroom Space
  - Work Shop Laboratory
  - Artifact and Exhibit Storage Area
  - Utility and Janitorial Service Space

- The open space area created between these two structures will provide the following functions:
  - Group Orientation Area
  - Outdoor Exhibit Space
  - Park Guided Tour Embarkation Point
  - Visitor Relaxation and Meeting Place
  - Scenic Overlook and Interpretation

- Install a new trailhead/assembly area adjacent to the entrance of the proposed visitor center and south of the parking lot to accommodate small and medium size group gatherings.
- Improve the existing 79 stall parking area with the addition of four ADA accessible parking spaces, including one van accessible space; delineation of three bus parking sites; and a bus unloading area at the building entrance. An all season pedestrian pathway will extend the length of the south side of the parking lot to the new Visitor Center.
- Remove approximately three trees of no more than 30” dbh (diameter at breast height) from within the proposed building footprint to accommodate placement of the visitor center. Remove an additional tree of no more than 30” dbh to accommodate placement of utility connections.
- Landscape around visitor center, over trenching areas, adjacent to pathways, and all areas disturbed by construction with native plants with low maintenance potential.
- Provide connections from existing utilities to the proposed Visitor Center including:
  - Install an additional new propane tank adjacent to the existing propane tank near the comfort station on the north side of the parking lot. Trenching from

the tank to the Visitor Center will extend 200 feet.
- Connect to the existing sewer line with the addition of a new manhole approximately 150 feet to the west of the proposed Visitor Center.
- Combine underground telephone and power lines in one trench and extend approximately 1500 feet to connect to the Visitor Center from the north. Electrical work will require the installation of a new main switchboard for the Visitor Center.
- Extend the existing water line, located west of the building for approximately 120 feet from the existing 3-inch water main.

2.6 PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

It is anticipated that construction will take approximately 10 months for completion. The construction site will be closed to the public during construction; the balance of the park will remain open. Work will occur during daylight hours. No work will occur during weekend, holidays, or park special event days unless approved by the State Representative. All trenches will be backfilled as work progresses and all construction areas will be fenced and plated as required to deter unauthorized entry.

Heavy equipment, such as a backhoe, excavator, grader, bulldozer, and dump truck, will be used during construction. Most equipment will be transported to the site and remain until the associated work is completed. Staging areas for the project will be on the construction site and/or parking lot. Transport vehicles for building components, pilot car, material delivery trucks, and crew vehicles will also be present intermittently at the site.

2.7 VISITATION TO CALAVERAS BIG TREES STATE PARK

The park unit receives an average of 156,617 visitors per year. Construction of a Visitor Center will not necessarily increase visitation, but will improve existing educational and interpretive programs.

Year	Free Day Use	Paid Day-Use	Overnight Camping	Total
1995/96	12,977	108,669	70,052	191,698
1996/97	1,856	96,075	42,265	140,197
1997/98	9,919	92,411	45,406	147,737
1998/99	8,530	106,147	46,363	161,039
1999/00	11,523	106,255	52,101	169,879
2000/01	13,715	114,196	47,356	175,267
2001/02	7,910	104,946	47,551	160,407
2002/03	16,898	103,182	44,740	164,820
2003/04	2,505	62,518	33,494	98,517
Total	**85,833**	**894,399**	**429,327**	**1,409,560**
Average Attendance	**9,537**	**9,537**	**47,703**	**156,617**

2.8 CONSISTENCY WITH LOCAL PLANS AND POLICIES

The visitor center project with the associated infrastructure, utility, and accessibility improvements will adhere to all applicable regulations, codes, ordinances, and permit requirements set forth by regulatory agencies.

2.9 DISCRETIONARY APPROVALS

DPR has approval authority for implementation of projects within the boundaries of the Calaveras Big Trees State Park, including the Visitor Center Construction project. However, the following permits and/or consultations may be required before work can begin.

- Calaveras County Environmental Health and Safety
- Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) will be necessary and a Stormwater Management Plan may be required.
- A permit for any traffic controls may be acquired from the Calaveras County Department of Transportation and Public Works.
- State Fire Marshal (plan approval)
- Ebbetts Pass Property Owners Association (coordination)
- Greater Arnold Business Association (coordination)
- Calaveras County Board of Supervisors (coordination)
- Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors (coordination)
- United States Forest Service (coordination)
- California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (coordination)
- Chaw'se Citizens Advisory Committee (coordination)
- Calaveras Big Trees Association (coordination, funding support)
- Save-the-Redwoods League (coordination)
- Native American Heritage Commission (site investigation)
- Department of General Services/DPR Accessibility Section (access compliance plan approval)
- California Department of Fish and Game (coordination)
- Calaveras County Historical Society (coordination)

2.10 RELATED PROJECTS

DPR often has other smaller maintenance programs and rehabilitation projects planned for a park unit. Due to the condition and historic nature of buildings at the park there are numerous maintenance and restoration projects in progress at any given time.

At the time this Visitor Center project was approved, the facility was planned to connect to the existing sewer system. Since that time, the exisitng leachfield has begun to fail, however, a project has been proposed (pending funding) for Fiscal Year 2004/2005 to install a new leachfield to replace the failing field. The new vistor center will not open until an approved leachfield or an alternative approved sewage removal method is developed and installed.

Upon completion of the proposed visitor center, the existing visitor center will be converted to park office and administrative uses. With the appropriate environmental document prepared for the project.

Chapter 3
ENVIRONMENTAL CHECKLIST

PROJECT INFORMATION

1.	Project Title:	Visitor Center
2.	Lead Agency Name & Address:	California Department of Parks and Recreation
3.	Contact Person & Phone Number:	Michael Romo, (916) 445-8742
4.	Project Location:	Calaveras Big Trees State Park Calaveras County, California
5.	Project Sponsor Name & Address:	California Department of Parks and Recreation Acquisition and Planning Division Northern Service Center One Capital Mall - Suite 500 Sacramento, California 95814
6.	General Plan Designation:	State Park Calaveras Big Trees State Park, General Plan 1989
7.	Zoning:	Recreation

8. Description of Project:
The Department of Parks and Recreation (California State Parks) proposes to construct a Visitor Center on the grounds of Calaveras Big Trees Stare Park. The following is a summary of the proposed work:
- Construct a permanent, accessible visitor center of approximately 7000 square feet;
- Install a new trailhead/assembly area adjacent the proposed visitor center;
- Improve the parking area to include four Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) spaces, including one van accessible space, 79 standards spaces and three bus parking spaces;
- Remove approximately four small trees of no more than 30” diameter at breast height to accommodate visitor center and utility placement;
- Provide utility connections to the new office/visitor center including water, sewer, electricity, telephone, security/fire alarm, and telecommunications infrastructure; and
- Provide low-maintenance, native plant landscaping around visitor center, over trenching areas, adjacent to pathways, and all areas disturbed by construction.

9.	Surrounding Land Uses & Setting:	Refer to Chapter 3 of this document (Section IX, Land Use Planning)

10. Approval Required from Other Public Agencies

1. ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS POTENTIALLY AFFECTED:

The environmental factors checked below would be potentially affected by this project, involving at least one impact that is a "Potentially Significant Impact", as indicated by the checklist on the following pages.

☐ Aesthetics	☐ Agricultural Resources	☐ Air Quality
☐ Biological Resources	☐ Cultural Resources	☐ Geology/Soils
☐ Hazards & Hazardous Materials	☐ Hydrology/Water Quality	☐ Land Use/Planning
☐ Mineral Resources	☐ Noise	☐ Population/Housing
☐ Public Services	☐ Recreation	☐ Transportation/Traffic
☐ Utilities/Service Systems	☐ Mandatory Findings of Significance	☐ None

DETERMINATION

On the basis of this initial evaluation:

I find that the proposed project **COULD NOT** have a significant effect on the environment and a **NEGATIVE DECLARATION** will be prepared. ☐

I find that, although the original scope of the proposed project **COULD** have had a significant effect on the environment, there **WILL NOT** be a significant effect because revisions/mitigations to the project have been made by or agreed to by the applicant. A **MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION** will be prepared. ☒

I find that the proposed project **MAY** have a significant effect on the environment and an **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT** or its functional equivalent will be prepared. ☐

I find that the proposed project **MAY** have a "potentially significant impact" or "potentially significant unless mitigated impact" on the environment. However, at least one impact has been adequately analyzed in an earlier document, pursuant to applicable legal standards, and has been addressed by mitigation measures based on the earlier analysis, as described in the report's attachments. An **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT** is required, but it must analyze only the impacts not sufficiently addressed in previous documents. ☐

I find that, although the proposed project could have had a significant effect on the environment, because all potentially significant effects have been adequately analyzed in an earlier EIR or Negative Declaration, pursuant to applicable standards, and have been avoided or mitigated, pursuant to an earlier EIR, including revisions or mitigation measures that are imposed upon the proposed project, all impacts have been avoided or mitigated to a less-than-significant level and no further action is required. ☐

Original Signature on File

Patricia DuMont
Environmental Coordinator

Date

EVALUATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

1. A brief explanation is required for all answers, except "No Impact", that are adequately supported by the information sources cited. A "No Impact" answer is adequately supported if the referenced information sources show that the impact does not apply to the project being evaluated (e.g., the project falls outside a fault rupture zone). A "No Impact" answer should be explained where it is based on general or project-specific factors (e.g., the project will not expose sensitive receptors to pollutants, based on a project-specific screening analysis).

2. All answers must consider the whole of the project-related effects, both direct and indirect, including off-site, cumulative, construction, and operational impacts.

3. Once the lead agency has determined that a particular physical impact may occur, the checklist answers must indicate whether that impact is potentially significant, less than significant with mitigation, or less than significant. "Potentially Significant Impact" is appropriate when there is sufficient evidence that a substantial or potentially substantial adverse change may occur in any of the physical conditions within the area affected by the project that cannot be mitigated below a level of significance. If there are one or more "Potentially Significant Impact" entries, an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is required.

4. A "Mitigated Negative Declaration" (Negative Declaration: Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated) applies where the incorporation of mitigation measures, prior to declaration of project approval, has reduced an effect from "Potentially Significant Impact" to a "Less Than Significant Impact with Mitigation." The lead agency must describe the mitigation measures and briefly explain how they reduce the effect to a less than significant level.

5. Earlier analyses may be used where, pursuant to the tiering, program EIR, or other CEQA process, an effect has been adequately analyzed in an earlier EIR (including a General Plan) or Negative Declaration [CCR, Guidelines for the Implementation of CEQA, § 15063(c)(3)(D)]. References to an earlier analysis should:

   a) Identify the earlier analysis and state where it is available for review.

   b) Indicate which effects from the environmental checklist were adequately analyzed in the earlier document, pursuant to applicable legal standards, and whether these effects were adequately addressed by mitigation measures included in that analysis.

   c) Describe the mitigation measures in this document that were incorporated or refined from the earlier document and indicate to what extent they address site-specific conditions for this project.

6. Lead agencies are encouraged to incorporate references to information sources for potential impacts into the checklist or appendix (e.g., general plans, zoning ordinances, biological assessments). Reference to a previously prepared or outside document should include an indication of the page or pages where the statement is substantiated.

7. A source list should be appended to this document. Sources used or individuals contacted should be listed in the source list and cited in the discussion.

8. Explanation(s) of each issue should identify:
   a) the criteria or threshold, if any, used to evaluate the significance of the impact addressed by each question **and**
   b) the mitigation measures, if any, prescribed to reduce the impact below the level of significance.

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ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

I. AESTHETICS.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Calaveras Big Trees SP is one of the most visited units of the California State Park System and was established as a State Park in 1931. In 1964, the State Parks Commission declared that the purpose of this park was to make the North and South Calaveras groves of Sierra Redwoods available to the people forever, in a condition of ecological integrity, for their inspiration, enlightenment, and enjoyment. Visitors are attracted not only by the Sierra redwood groves, but also by the surrounding forests, streams, and vistas. The 6,500-acre park contains two groves of Sierra redwoods and extremely fine examples of the other coniferous species for this portion of the Sierra Nevada, most of which reach exceptional size and majesty. These trees are also notable for their coloration and effect produced by the play of light and shadows upon them at different seasons and times of day and in the various circumstances under which they grow.

Located at approximately 5,000 feet, the park experiences seasonal changes of weather and foliage against an evergreen backdrop of forest conifers. Wildflowers, flowering vines, and mountain dogwood announce spring in the park and the brilliant fall colors of big-leaf maples, dogwood, and hazelnut trees herald the approaching snows. Visitors may hike or ski anywhere in the park, or, in winter, take the 3 1/2 mile Ski Trail to the Scenic Overlook and loop back around to the North Grove. The parking lot and comfort station adjacent to the project site is open year-round; the main access road into the park and parking lot adjacent to the project site are plowed and generally accessible during the winter.

The project site is located near the entrance to the North Grove and immediately adjacent to the existing Campfire stage and several scenic highlights and trails. These include the Big Stump, from a majestic redwood that was felled in 1853 and large enough to serve as a dance floor, and the North Grove Trail, a one-mile loop that showcases some of the Grove's most spectacular trees. The site sits within a circle of large white fir, giant sequoia (sierra redwood), sugar pine, ponderosa pine, and incense cedar, although most of the project footprint is clear of trees. A paved parking area for approximately 60 vehicles adjoins the site to the west. Trails lead from the parking lot to the Big Stump, historic Jack Knight Hall (current visitor center), the group picnic area, family picnic area, and trailheads for the North Grove, Grove Overlook, and Sensory Trails. This area of the park has an allowable use intensity of Category III-IV. Category III includes low to moderate intensity recreational use, sightseeing along scenic corridors, vehicle accessibility to scenic attractions, picnicking, and day-use areas. Category IV areas allow large-scale facilities (such as the proposed visitor center), formal interpretive exhibits, and major paved roads, so long as consideration is given for the special natural and cultural sensitivities that define this park. The proposed building footprint is within a Category IV area.

State Highway (Hwy.) 4, which provides access to Calaveras Big Trees SP, runs northeast-southwest through the park and is designated as the Ebbetts Pass State Scenic Highway. It is

also under consideration for National Scenic Byway status. The proposed project area is marginally visible from the highway, through stands of redwood forest.

WOULD THE PROJECT:	POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	NO IMPACT
a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?	☐	☐	☒	☐
c) Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?	☐	☐	☒	☐
d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?	☐	☐	☒	☐

DISCUSSION

a) As noted in the Environmental Setting above, Calaveras Big Trees SP was established to preserve the North Grove of giant sequoias and the surrounding forest habitat. As a result, all areas of the park, even maintenance yards and residences, have been developed and maintained to be as compatible as possible with these scenic wonders. Almost all views within the park are scenic; buildings are, for the most part, rustic in character to blend with the landscape. The proposed Visitor Center will also be designed to complement the surrounding forest environment, using natural materials and muted colors, and will be compatible with existing park buildings.

   Vistas generally allude to expansive or distant views. Because of the heavy stands of timber throughout the park, this type of vista is generally confined to vista points at higher elevations or corridors along the trails. The proposed project site is not within, visible from, or blocking any existing scenic vista. Views of the project site and the completed facility from Hwy. 4, a designated State Scenic Highway, will be substantially screened by existing stands of redwood forest. Less than significant impact.

b) The proposed project location is within the Hwy. 4 scenic corridor, although the views from the highway are heavily screened by existing stands of redwood forest, those traveling on Hwy. 4 through the park may have a brief, limited view of the construction work in progress. Project-related visual intrusions or impacts along the scenic corridor will include:
   - Buildings: Permanent minor intrusion, in keeping with existing widely dispersed buildings screened from the roadway; exterior colors and materials will be compatible with the environment and allow the natural landscape to dominate.
   - Parking Lots: Minor alterations to an existing permanent moderate intrusion; neat, with partial screening from the highway.
   - Grading: Temporary minor intrusion during construction; grading will blend with adjacent landforms and topography.

- Tree Removal: Minor intrusion; only three-four mature, scenic trees will be removed in a heavily forested area, with many comparable trees remaining.

Potential impacts to the Hwy. 4 scenic resources from the proposed project will be less than significant.

c) As noted in Discussion I(a) above, the entire park and its environs is scenic and the proposed Visitor Center will be designed to complement these scenic natural surroundings. While the addition of a Visitor Center within the existing landscape will not degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings, it will substantially alter the appearance of the site. An empty meadow will be replaced with a two-story structure and the existing unobstructed views through the forest from the parking lot to the campfire center will not be available until visitors enter the viewing area within the structure or pass the building on the adjacent trails. However, neither construction nor operation of the Visitor Center will hinder accessibility to any of the park's scenic areas.

As with any construction project, there will be some temporary decrease in the visual appeal of the area immediately affected by the work being performed. Construction will be visible from the parking lot adjacent to the site for the new buildings. Visitors to Jack Knight Hall (current visitor center), to attractions such as the Big Stump and hiking/interpretive trails, and to picnic areas use this area. However, alternate routes to park facilities are available and construction activities will not be easily visible from most picnic, camping, and scenic areas, limiting visitor exposure. Less than significant impact.

d) Lighting is a minor element of this project. A limited number of permanent new light sources will be introduced into the landscape around the new Visitor Center and parking area and the interior of the structure will be lighted. Outdoor lighting fixtures will be positioned downward and shielded to reduce glare and dispersion of light to offsite locations. Security lighting will be on timers and motion detectors, limiting the amount of lighting when the facility is not in use. There may be some usage of the facility after dark that will require normal interior illumination and increased outdoor illumination in the vicinity of the activity and along access routes from the buildings to the outside venue and parking lot. Lighting may be marginally visible to passing motorists on Hwy. 4, but will not cause a hazard or significant illumination of the surrounding landscape.

It is expected that all construction work for the proposed project will be limited to daylight hours, eliminating the need for work lights. However, unavoidable delays or emergency situations could require minimal use of exterior construction lights on a limited basis. Glare shields will be used on all light sources and work areas will be confined to a maximum of a few hundred feet at any one time.

Therefore, the proposed project will not adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area. Less than significant impact.

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II. AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Calaveras Big Trees State Park is located four miles northeast of Arnold on State Hwy. 4. The proposed project is located within the park boundaries, which does not contain any agricultural operations or farmland. The United States Forest Service owns most of the land surrounding the park, occasionally conducting timber harvesting. Sierra Pacific Industries owns land approximately one half-mile north of Calaveras Big Trees SP also used for timber harvesting and cattle grazing occurs approximately nine miles adjacent to the South Grove area of the park. This project is proposed for the North Grove area.

WOULD THE PROJECT*:	POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	NO IMPACT
a) Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?	☐	☐	☐	☒
b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act contract?	☐	☐	☐	☒
c) Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use?	☐	☐	☐	☒

* In determining whether impacts to agricultural resources are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to the California Agricultural Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Model (1997), prepared by the California Department of Conservation as an optional model for use in assessing impacts on agricultural and farmland.

DISCUSSION

a-c) As noted in the Environmental Setting above, Calaveras Big Trees SP does not support any agricultural operations. All work proposed as part of this project will be confined within the park boundaries near the North Grove. Although areas of land adjoining the park are used for agricultural purposes, this project will have no effect on any category of California Farmland or conflict with any existing zoning for agricultural use or Williamson Act contract. The proposed project will not result in the conversion of farmland to non-agricultural use.

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III. AIR QUALITY.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Calaveras SP is located in the Mountain Counties Air Basin (MCAB), which is comprised of all of Plumas, Sierra, Nevada, Amador, Calaveras, Tuolumne, and Mariposa counties and portions of El Dorado and Placer counties and under the jurisdiction of the Calaveras County Air Pollution Control District (CCAPCD) and United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) Region IX.

Moderately high precipitation, regular afternoon winds, generally very low levels of commuter traffic, and a small industrial base results in relatively clean air throughout most of Calaveras County. Because of these conditions, Calaveras County is in attainment /unclassified with California standards for, lead, nitrogen dioxide, sulfur dioxide, sulfides and visibility-reducing particles (VRPs). An area is designated in attainment if the state standard for the specified pollutant was not violated at any site during a three-year period. The County is unclassified for carbon monoxide and hydrogen sulfide. Unclassified if the data are incomplete and do not support a designation of attainment or non-attainment

Because the county air quality is influenced by movements of air masses from the Central Valley, in April 2004, the USEPA reclassified the California Central Valley Air Pollution from 'severe' to ‘extreme’, the county is in non-attainment with California standards for ozone and particulate matter (PM10 – or particles with an aerodynamic diameter of 10 microns or less). An area is designated in non-attainment if there was at least one violation of a State standard for that pollutant within the area boundaries.

With respect to federal standards, Calaveras County is in an unclassified / attainment zone for ozone and carbon monoxide and unclassified for PM10. Areas that cannot be classified or are better than the national standards are designated as unclassified/attainment. Unclassified: any area that cannot be classified on the basis of available information as meeting or not meeting the national primary or secondary ambient air quality standard for the pollutant. Sulfates, Lead, Hydrogen Sulfide and VRPs are not

Calaveras County Air Quality Designations

	2002 State Levels	**2002 Federal Levels**
Ozone	Non-attainment	Unclassified/Attainment
Carbon Monoxide	Unclassified	Unclassified/Attainment
Nitrogen Dioxide	Attainment or Unclassified	Attainment or Unclassified
Sulfur Dioxide	Attainment or Unclassified	Attainment or Unclassified
Particulate Matter 10	Non-attainment	Unclassified
Sulfates	Attainment	N/A
Lead	Attainment or Unclassified	N/A
Hydrogen Sulfide	Unclassified	N/A
Visibility Reducing Particles	Attainment or Unclassified	N/A

The California Air Resources Board makes State area designations for nine criteria pollutants: ozone, carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, sulfur dioxide, suspended particulate matter

(PM10), sulfates, lead, hydrogen sulfide, and visibility-reducing particles. The USEPA makes National area designations for five criteria pollutants: ozone, carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, sulfur dioxide, and PM10.

WOULD THE PROJECT*:	POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	NO IMPACT
a) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan or regulation?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b) Violate any air quality standard or contribute substantially to an existing or projected air quality violation?	☐	☒	☐	☐
c) Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is in non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard (including releasing emissions which exceed quantitative thresholds for ozone precursors)?	☐	☒	☐	☐
d) Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations (e.g., children, the elderly, individuals with compromised respiratory or immune systems)?	☐	☐	☒	☐
e) Create objectionable odors affecting a substantial number of people?	☐	☐	☒	☐

* Where available, the significance criteria established by the applicable air quality management or air pollution control district may be relied on to make these determinations.

DISCUSSION

a) Work proposed in this project is not in conflict with or will not obstruct implementation of any applicable air quality management plan for Calaveras County or the Mountain Counties Air Basin. Less than significant impact.

b,c) The proposed project will not emit air contaminants at a level that, by themselves will violate any local, state, or federal ambient air quality standard (AAQS), or contribute to a permanent or long-term increase in any air contaminant. However, project construction will generate short-term emissions of fugitive dust (PM10) and involve the use of equipment that will emit ozone precursors (i.e., reactive organic gases [ROG] and nitrogen oxides, or NOx). Increased emissions of PM10, ROG, and NOx could contribute to existing non-attainment conditions and interfere with achieving the projected attainment standards. Consequently, construction emissions could be considered a potentially significant short-term adverse impact. Implementation of the following mitigation measures, in accordance with the CCAPCD guidelines, will reduce potential impact to a less than significant level.

MITIGATION MEASURES AIR-1

- All active construction areas will be watered at least twice daily during dry, dusty conditions. Any activities that cause visible dust plumes that cannot be controlled by watering will be suspended
- All trucks hauling soil, sand, or other loose materials on public roads will be covered or required to maintain at least two feet of freeboard.
- All gasoline-powered equipment will be maintained in good mechanical condition (according to manufacture's specifications), and in compliance with all State and federal requirements.
- Excavation and grading activities will be suspended when sustained winds exceed 15 mph, instantaneous gusts exceed 25 mph, or dust from construction might obscure driver visibility on public roads.
- Disturbed areas will be re-vegetated as quickly as feasible following completion of construction.
- Earth or other material that has been transported by trucking or earth moving equipment, erosion by water, or other means onto paved streets will be promptly removed.

d) Individuals or groups that would be especially reactive to pollutants are considered sensitive receptors, such as children, the elderly, and those who are acutely or chronically ill. Facilities where these sensitive receptors are likely to be located include schools, playgrounds, childcare centers, retirement and convalescent homes, hospitals, medical clinics, and residences. The project is not located near any sensitive receptors, except for a single park employee residence to the southwest. All schools are at least 1.5 miles from the project site. Any equipment use that could generate fugitive dust will be of limited duration, both in daily operation and as a percentage of the proposed work for this project. The project area will be closed to the public and it is expected that most or all of the work will occur during daylight hours. These conditions, combined with full implementation of the mitigation measures included in **MITIGATION MEASURE AIR-1** above, will result in a less than significant impact.

e) The proposed work will not result in the long-term generation of odors. Construction related emissions could result in a short-term generation of odors, including diesel exhaust and fuel or solvent vapors. Some park personnel and nearby sensitive receptors (park visitors) might consider these odors objectionable. However, because construction activities will be short-term, odorous emissions will be limited and dissipate rapidly in the air, with increased distance from the source. The potential for impact during construction or operation of this project will be considered less than significant.

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IV. BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Calaveras SP is located along the slope of the western Sierra Nevada, a part of the Sierra Nevada Landscape Province. Hwy, 4 provides sole access to the park as well as to Arnold, the closest community three miles west of the park. The park is bisected by the North Fork Stanislaus River, which forms a deep canyon that separates the North and South Groves of Sierra Redwood. Almost the entire 6000-acre park is covered by mixed coniferous forests, with minor communities of montane, meadow, riparian, oak woodland, and grassland.

Calaveras SP supports various plant communities, primarily forests (plant community names follow Sawyer & Keeler-Wolf [1995]). The project area is located in two plant community types: giant sequoia series and white fir series. Giant sequoia usually occurs in scattered groves, and does not grow in pure stands. Calaveras Big Trees North Grove is a typical giant sequoia grove, where it is found in a mixed conifer type dominated by California white fir (*Abies concolor*). Characteristic associates include sugar pine (*Pinus lambertiana*), ponderosa pine (*P. ponderosa*), Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), incense-cedar (*Calocedrus decurrens*), and California black oak (*Quercus kelloggii*). Shrub types include bush chinquapin (*Castanopsis sempervirens*) and mountain whitethorn (*Ceanothus cordulatus*).

Special-Status Species[1]

Sensitive biological resources that occur or potentially occur on the proposed project site are discussed in this section. Sensitive biological resources include the plants and animals that have been given special recognition by federal, state, or local resource agencies and organizations. Also considered are habitats that are listed as critical for the survival of a listed species or have special value for wildlife, as well as plant communities that are unique or of limited distribution. Specific information on the biological resources is provided along with potential impacts to those resources from the construction of new facilities. Not mentioned in the discussions of habitats, but nonetheless important to maintain are the “wildlife trees”. These trees are characteristically the largest trees; exhibit natural cavities; have structure suitable for wildlife use (broken top, large limbs); may have crevices and/or loose bark (suitable for bats); show signs of rot (conk, brooms) or insect infestation; and may have signs of active wildlife use.

The US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) provided an official list of sensitive species that may be present in the project area or may be affected by the project (July 2003). Sensitive species include Threatened and Endangered plant and wildlife species, and California Species of Special Concern (species that receive protection because of declining populations, limited ranges, and/or continuing threats that make them vulnerable to extinction). All sensitive

[1] For the purposes of this document, special-status species are defined as plants and animals that are legally protected or that are considered sensitive by federal, state, or local resource conservation agencies and organizations. Specifically, this includes species listed as state or federally Threatened or Endangered, those considered as candidates for listing as Threatened or Endangered, species identified by the USFWS and/or CDFG as Species of Concern, animals identified by CDFG as Fully Protected or Protected, and plants considered California Native Plant Society (CNPS) to be rare, threatened, or endangered (i.e. plants on CNPS lists 1 and 2)

species and their habitats were evaluated for potential impacts by this project. A query of the California Department of Fish and Game's (CDFG) California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB 2003) was conducted for locations of sensitive species and habitats within the Dorrington 7.5-minute USGS quadrangle map and Calaveras County. Special-status plant species potentially occurring in the Dorrington quadrangle map were obtained from the California Native Plant Society's (CNPS) Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants of California (6th edition, electronic version, 2001).

SPECIES EVALUATED FOR THIS PROJECT

The following species were identified by the USFWS, CNPS, or CNDDB as occurring or potentially occurring in the Dorrington USGS quadrangle encompassing the proposed project site and adjacent habitats. One special-status plant species, 11 wildlife species, and 1 plant community are described below, and potential impacts from the project are stated. In spring of 2003, a DPR Ecologist conducted botanical survey for sensitive plant species; no sensitive plant species were located.

Plants

Stebbins' lomatium (*Lomatium stebbinsii)* – This CNPS List 1B species occurs in yellow pine forest, at 4,100 to 5,600 feet elevation. It is found on gravelly, volcanic soils ("balds") in chaparral. Suitable habitat for this species does not exist within the project site.

Animals

Foothill yellow-legged frog (*Rana boylii*) – A Federal and California species of concern that occurs from near sea level to 6,000 feet, in shallow flowing streams, usually containing cobbles. There is no aquatic habitat for foothill yellow-legged frog within the proposed project area.

Mountain yellow-legged frog *(Rana muscosa)* – A California species of concern that occurs above 7,000 feet elevation in the Sierra Nevada. This frog is always encountered within a few feet of water. There is no aquatic habitat for mountain yellow-legged frog within the proposed project area.

California spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis occidentalis*) – A Federal and California Species of Concern that inhabits mature forests. Spotted owls are found in habitats with complex structure (trees in many size classes), high canopy closure, and many large diameter trees (greater than 3 feet diameter, measured at 4.5 feet above the ground). Spotted owls typically nest in tree cavities or on platforms (such as abandoned raptor nests). Informal surveys have been conducted during the past 10 years and have located nested spotted owls approximately 0.5 to 1 mile from the project site. Nesting areas within parks are potentially threatened by increased human use and associated disturbances (CDFG website).

Northern goshawk *(Accipiter gentilis*) – A Federal and California Species of Concern is found in dense, mature conifer forests at most elevations. Nest sites are usually associated with patches of relatively larger, denser forest than the surrounding landscape, and home ranges often encompass a wide range of forest age classes. Although goshawks defend nests vigorously, activities such as logging near nests can cause nest

abandonment. Northern goshawks have been observed regularly in the North Grove within 1 mile of the proposed project site. The project could negatively affect effect northern goshawk nesting.

Flammulated owl (*Otus flammeolus*) – A Federal Species of Concern
The Flammulated owl is generally associated with montane forest habitats, often with a shrub understory. Flammulated owls spend the spring and summer in North America and migrate south of the US/ Mexico border in fall. This owl hunts insects at night and nests in cavities in standing dead trees. This species is threatened by timber harvest and removal of snags (standing dead trees). Flammulated owls may occupy the North Grove within 0.25 miles of the project site. The project could impact flammulated owls.

White-headed woodpecker (*Picoides albolarvatus*) – A Federal Species of Concern is found in open conifer habitats of montane forests and forages on live mature trees and snags. This woodpecker forages on trunks of trees for insects in summer and eats primarily pine seeds in winter. White-headed woodpeckers could be harmed by pesticide use in forests and by snag removal. This project could impact white-headed woodpeckers.

Sensitive bat species – There are several sensitive bat species that occur within Calaveras SP. The California Species of Special Concern that could roost in trees within the project area are the small-footed myotis (*Myotis ciliolabrum)*, long-eared myotis *(Myotis evotis),* Western mastiff bat *(Eumops perotis),* fringed myotis *(Myotis thysanodes),* and long-legged myotis *(Myotis volans)*. The project could impact sensitive bat species.

Sierra Nevada red fox (*Vulpes vulpes necator*) – A California Threatened and Federal Species of Concern that is found in forests and meadows. Because Sierra Nevada red fox uses large areas and varied habitats, this project will have a less than significant effect on this species.

SENSITIVE NATURAL COMMUNITIES

Sensitive natural communities are plant communities that are regionally uncommon or unique, unusually diverse, or of special concern to local, state, and federal agencies. Removal or substantial degradation of these plant communities constitutes a significant adverse impact under CEQA.

The CNDDB record search produced one sensitive natural community, the Big Tree Forest, for the Dorrington 7.5-minute quadrangle. The Big Tree Forest consists of large stands of giant sequoias that are present in isolated groves along the west slope of the Sierra Nevada. These groves are the remnants of forests that were once prominent throughout the United States, but are now limited. The one occurrence of the Big Tree Forest is found in the North Grove, which borders the project site.

WETLANDS AND WATERS OF THE UNITED STATES

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) defines wetlands as lands that are inundated or saturated by surface or ground water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in

saturated soil conditions. Typically, USACE jurisdictional wetlands meet three criteria: hydrophytic vegetation, hydric soils, and wetland hydrology.

Waters of U.S. are under the jurisdiction of USACE, and are defined as all waters used in interstate or foreign commerce, waters subject to the ebb and flow of the tide, all interstate waters including interstate wetlands and other waters such as intrastate lakes, rivers, streams, mudflats, wetlands, sloughs, wet meadows, and natural ponds.

USACE jurisdictional wetlands and Waters of the U.S. occur at Calaveras Big Trees SP. There are no wetlands or Waters of the U.S. within the proposed project area.

	POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	NO IMPACT
WOULD THE PROJECT:				
a) Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modification, on any species identified as a sensitive, candidate, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?	☐	☒	☐	☐
b) Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?	☐	☒	☐	☐
c) Have a substantial adverse effect on federally protected wetlands, as defined by §404 of the Clean Water Act (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?	☐	☐	☐	☒
d) Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?	☐	☒	☐	☐
e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?	☐	☐	☐	☒
f) Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?	☐	☐	☐	☒

DISCUSSION

(i) Spotted owls and northern goshawks nest in the North Grove approximately 0.5 to 1 mile from the project site. The following mitigation measure will be implemented to reduce impacts to nesting spotted owls and northern goshawks to less than significant.

MITIGATION MEASURE BIO-1 - NEST PROTECTION FOR SPOTTED OWL AND NORTHERN GOSHAWK

- A DPR-qualified resource ecologist will conduct surveys for nests of spotted owl and northern goshawk to identify active nests within 0.25 miles of the project area. The surveys will be conducted during each breeding season beginning in 2004 and continued for each year of the construction period. The surveys will follow protocols approved by the California Department of Fish and Game.
- In the event that nesting spotted owls are found in the vicinity of the project area, an appropriate buffer zone with activity restrictions will be established, in consultation with DFG. Restrictions will remain in place from February 1 to August 31.
- In the event that nesting northern goshawks are found in the vicinity of the project area, an appropriate buffer zone with activity restrictions will be established, in consultation with DFG. Restrictions will remain in place from March 15 to August 31.

a) (ii) Many sensitive animal species depend on large trees or snags for nesting, roosting or colonization (flammulated owl, white-headed wood-pecker, sensitive bat species). It is important to identify these "wildlife trees" which are important wildlife habitat and therefore contribute to biodiversity. Implementation of the following mitigation measure will reduce potential impacts to a less than significant level.

MITIGATION MEASURE BIO-2 WILDLIFE TREE RETENTION

- A DPR Resource Ecologist will identify wildlife trees on the project site during initial planning. Trees in the active construction zone will be identified with flagging and protected if necessary with fencing or weed-free straw bales. Any such tree scheduled for removal will be felled between August and April to avoid the breeding season, and left on site, if possible, to function as coarse woody debris.

b) (i) As mentioned in the Environmental Setting above, Big Tree Forest is designated a sensitive natural community by the California Department of Fish and Game, and is found in the North Grove surrounding the project site. The Calaveras Big Trees General Plan (1989) directed DPR to "manage the North and South Calaveras Groves in such a manner as to restore, if necessary, and to maintain conditions in as nearly as possible the natural manner that would have occurred in the absence of all interference of Euroamerican people..." Damage to mature retention trees (> 12 inches dbh) will be reduced to less than significant levels by implementing the following mitigation measure.

MITIGATION MEASURE BIO-3 TREE PROTECTION MEASURES

- Prior to construction, trees selected for retention will be identified, and all areas of ground disturbance will be flagged on the ground and inspected by a DPR Ecologist for potential impacts to roots, trunks and limbs
- Ground disturbing activities that will impact trees, as determined by the DPR Ecologist, will be conducted at a depth and location to avoid structural tree roots (roots > 1.5" diameter). If tree roots >1.5" diameter are encountered, then contractor will excavate by hand underneath tree roots. Alternatively, boring or trenching will go at least three feet deep to avoid mature tree roots
- DPR will replace, at a ratio of 1 per inch of diameter at breast height, all trees designated for removal
- In the event that construction work takes place next to mature retention trees, these will be protected by the contractor with safety fencing and/or certified weed-free straw bales to prevent damage to roots, trunk, and limbs
- In the event that retention trees must be removed due to damage based on an evaluation by a DPR Resource Ecologist, then the contractor will mitigate at a ratio of 1 seedling per inch of dbh for each retention tree removed as directed by a DPR Resource Ecologist.

c) No wetlands or waters of the U.S. are located in the project area. No project activities could result in erosion or sedimentation of streams. The project will have no impact to wetlands or waters of the U.S.

d) Through implementation of **MITIGATION MEASURE BIO-1**, potential impacts to movements, migration, or nursery sites of sensitive bat species (as discussed in the environmental setting) will be reduced to less than significant.

e, f) This project does not conflict with any local ordinances, adopted conservation plans, or policies. No impact.

V. CULTURAL RESOURCES.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Calaveras Big Trees State Park (CBTSP) is located midway up the western slope of the central Sierra Nevada along State Highway 4 in eastern Calaveras County. Elevations are highest at the northeast (5,230 feet) and southeast (5,560 feet) portions of the park, while the lowest is at the park entrance off State Highway 4 near the North Grove at 4,700 feet in elevation.

Augustus T. Dowd discovered the Calaveras North Grove in the spring 1852. It was not long after the discovery before word of the incredible trees spread throughout the community, state and then throughout the botanical world. Exploitation of the Big Trees and tourism immediately followed the discovery.

CBTSP has ten standing structures that are associated either with the hotels, or with the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) park development period. One of the most historic features in the park is the Big Stump, together with the adjacent Chip or butt log, both the remains of what was the largest tree in the North Grove and the first Sierra redwood seen by Augustus Dowd in 1852. The contributing element, as with other named Sierra redwoods in the park, exhibits historic markings and alterations, including carved dates and initials. The Office of Historic Preservation is currently reviewing the Big Stump for National Register eligibility in its own right.

At least two historic trail and road segments pass through the Visitor Center area of potential effect, including the 1854 North Grove entrance carriage road, the 1861 hotel road, and possibly the Emigrant Trail Loop (Costello 1988:15). Parts of these have been used as fire and maintenance roads, and as cross-country ski trails, but still retain some of the integrity and possible subsurface deposits. The current park headquarters building, known historically as the “Cottage of Six Rooms” and the “Whiteside House’, is the only standing building form the hotel era. It is the oldest extant building in the park having been built c. 1862 (McAleer 1988:57). South of the hotel proper was a circular driveway, surrounding a lawn with a picket fence and a three-tiered marble fountain. Parts of the fountain are in the CBT Archives but utilities trenching through this area could uncover additional artifacts. The CCC rehabilitated the S&P Hotel including adding a stone masonry foundation to the west annex, which was filled with equipment when the hotel burned down in 1943 (CBT Archives photo). The hotel schoolhouse was located between the hotel and the Mother of the Forest tree, potentially in the path of the proposed spur trail (ibid: 60-61)

Historic properties from the 1930’s CCC era include Big Trees Lodge (a.k.a Jack Knight Hall), the former CCC dispensary (currently the Natural Resources Offices), a pump house, the Sentinels Bridge, the North Grove Campground, various trails, and four buildings across Hwy 4 in the park maintenance yard. The construction date of the outdoor amphitheater, south of the proposed CBT Visitor Center is unknown. The amphitheater appears on a 1936 list of CCC work projects at Calaveras Big Trees to “redwood log benches” and “recreational facilities”, and examples of Outdoor Theaters at other CC-built parks (Good 1938-198; Engbeck 2002) suggest that it dates to the CCC (a934-1941) era. The existing plank and concrete benches, fire circle and stage are probably post-war Park Rustic style replacements. Character-defining

features of the outdoor theater include its southeastern orientation with the North Grove as a scenic backdrop, its naturally sloping topography, forest setting, and acoustics that separate it form other park activities (good 1938:198).

The Park also has 12 Park Rustic-style, post-war buildings that are recommended eligible for the California Register of historic Places and/or are architecturally compatible with a potential National Register Historic Recreational District (Newland 2002). The significance of the District is that the North Grove of Sierra redwoods at Calaveras Big Trees State Park, known as The Big Tree or Mammoth Grove in the 1850s, was one of the first tourist destinations or resorts in California (McAleer 1986:131).

The chronology of human activity in the Sierra Nevada may date back more than 10,000 years, although the earliest known dated sites are slightly more than 8,000 years old. Native Americans used the area around Calaveras Big Trees SP for hunting, gathering, and food processing with little disturbance until the middle of the 19th century.

Archaeological resources currently recorded at Calaveras Big Trees SP include 39 native American sites, 14 historic sites, and a potential national Register District including 8 historic buildings, Big Stump, the North Grove and the North Grove Campground. Recorded Native American sites consist of 35 bedrock mortar features, six bedrock mortar sites with lithic scatters, and ten lithic scatters (McAleer 1986:25)

The 14 recorded historic archaeological sites in the park include the 1853 Big Tree Cottage Complex, the 1860's Sperry and Perry Hotel complex, historic road and trail segments, the Union Water Ditch and the P.G & E flume and ditch, three cabin sites, and four trash dumps. An estimated 99% of the park has been surveyed, but it is likely that subsequent inventories will reveal additional cultural resources.

	POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	NO IMPACT
WOULD THE PROJECT:				
a) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource, as defined in §15064.5?	☐	☐	☐	☒
b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource, pursuant to §15064.5?	☐	☒	☐	☐
c) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries?	☐	☒	☐	☐

DISCUSSION

a) As designed, this project could have an impact on the viewshed of the historic Hotel Annex, should the removal of the four trees cause a gap in the mature vegetation large enough for the new building to be seen. The new building design will be architecturally compatible with

the surrounding structures and the existing mature vegetation will prevent the new building from impacting the viewshed of the historic Hotel Annex building located near, but not within, the designated APE. Implementation of **MITIGATION MEASURES Cult-1** below will reduce the impact to a less than significant level.

MITIGATION MEASURE CULTURAL 1
Existing mature vegetation at the proposed construction site will be retained, with limited pruning to protect the viewshed of the historic Hotel Annex building.

b) The region, the park unit, and the project area have a high degree of archaeological sensitivity. The topography and the natural environment provided an ideal setting for prehistoric occupation and land use. Native American sites have been recorded in and around the park unit. Construction activities associated with this project, including but not limited to ground disturbance and staging of equipment, could significantly impact archaeological resources. Implementation of **MITIGATION MEASURES CULT-2, -3,** and **-4** will reduce impacts to archaeological deposits to a less than significant level.

MITIGATION MEASURE CULT 2 – PRECONSTRUCTION TESTING

- In those areas of the APE where project redesign is impossible and ground disturbances are unavoidable, a pre-construction archaeological testing program will be implemented to determine if archaeological deposits exist below the surface. The data generated from this investigation will determine if a data recovery or archaeological monitoring will be implemented.
- If archaeological monitoring is determined to be necessary during ground-disturbing activities, the work will be conducted by and at the discretion of the DPR archaeologist assigned to the project. The archaeological monitor will be notified a minimum of two weeks prior to the start of ground-disturbing work to schedule monitoring, unless other arrangements have been made in advance.
- A report of the findings from the testing, data recovery, or monitoring will be completed and copies distributed to the Cultural Resource Division, California State Park Headquarters; the DPR Northern Service Center; and the Central Valley District.

The location of utility trenching will be adjusted to minimize impacts to known historical archaeology remains. However, because of the natural ambiguity of archaeological resources and the obscured ground visibility due to park landscaping, the full extent of the cultural resources may not be known. Ground-disturbing activities proposed as part of the project could significantly impact unknown archaeological deposits in the APE. The following mitigation measure will reduce impacts to previously unidentified archaeological sites and features to a less than significant level.

MITIGATION MEASURE CULT 3 - MONITORING

- In the event that previously unknown cultural resources (including but not limited to dark soil containing shellfish, bone, flaked stone, groundstone, or deposits of historic trash) are encountered during project construction by anyone, the state representative will put work on hold at that specific location and contractors will be redirected to other tasks. A DPR-qualified archaeologist will record and evaluate the find and work with state representative to implement avoidance, preservation, or recovery measures as appropriate prior to any work resuming at that specific location.
- In the event that significant cultural resources are found in a project location, a qualified historian, archaeologist, and/or Native American representative (if appropriate) will monitor all subsurface work including trenching, grading, and excavations in that area from that point forward to ensure avoidance of significant impacts to cultural resources.

c) Burials have not been documented or recorded in the APE; however, there is always a potential of unanticipated discoveries of human bone. If any human remains or burial artifacts are identified, implementation of **MITIGATION MEASURE CULT- 3** below will reduce the impact to a less than significant level.

MITIGATION MEASURE CULTURAL 4 – BURIAL SITES

In the event that human remains are discovered, work will cease immediately in the area of the find and the project manager/site supervisor will notify the appropriate DPR personnel. Any human remains and/or funerary objects will be left in place or returned to the point of discovery and covered with soil. The DPR Sector Superintendent (or authorized representative) will notify the County Coroner, in accordance with §7050.5 of the California Health and Safety Code, and the Native American Heritage Commission (or Tribal Representative). If a Native American monitor is on-site at the time of the discovery, the monitor will be responsible for notifying the appropriate Native American authorities.

The local County Coroner will make the determination of whether the human bone is of Native American origin. In many of California's historic townsites and rural communities discoveries have been made of non-Native American human bone including non-Anglo.

If the coroner or tribal representative determines the remains represent Native American interment, the NAHC in Sacramento and/or tribe will be consulted to identify the most likely descendants and appropriate disposition of the remains. Work will not resume in the area of the find until proper disposition is complete (PRC §5097.98). No human remains or funerary objects will be cleaned, photographed, analyzed, or removed from the site prior to determination

If it is determined the find indicates a sacred or religious site, the site will be avoided to the maximum extent practicable. Formal consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office and review by the Native American Heritage Commission/Tribal Cultural representatives will also occur as necessary to define additional site mitigation or future restrictions.

VI. **GEOLOGY AND SOILS.**

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Topography

Calaveras Big Trees State Park (Park) is located on the west flank of the Central Sierra Nevada with elevations ranging from 3,440 to 5,560 feet (Leivas, 1983). The project site is located four miles northeast of Arnold and just east of Highway 4 near the main park entrance and the existing visitor center. The site topography is relatively gentle and slopes toward Big Tree Creek from an elevation of 4,704 to 4,692 at the southeast edge of the building (see Appendix A, figure G-1 and Site Plan).

Geology

The Park is located in the Sierra Nevada Geomorphic Province of California, a 400-mile long northwest-trending, tilted fault block with a steep eastern escarpment and a gentle western slope that dips under the Sacramento and San Joaquin Valley (CGS, 2001). The Sierra Nevada is a granitic batholith[2] of Late Jurassic to Cretaceous[3] age, containing scattered roof pendants[4] of older Paleozoic[5] metamorphic rocks, and capped in places with younger Cenozoic[6] volcanic rocks and Quaternary to Recent alluvium and colluvium[7] (Leivas, 1983).

The Visitor Center project is located on surficial deposits (alluvium & colluvium) underlain by granitic to granodioritic rock, according to the Park geologic map (Leivas, 1983). Some granitic outcrops may be present at or just below the surface at the project site. The Merhten Formation Lahar (a volcanic mudflow deposit) crops out to the north and east of the project area, capping the ridges.

Soils

Calaveras Big Trees SP is located in Soils Region III, as defined by the California Department of Conservation. This is the Sierra Nevada, Trinity, Cascade, and Sierras of Southern California unit, which comprises 21% of the state. These soils, typically derived from igneous rocks, typically have an acid reaction, and are low in available phosphorous (DPR, 1989). In the Park, the predominate parent material is the granitic-granodiorite rocks of the Sierra Nevada. These soils are usually deep, well developed, and very productive. Other soils that have developed on the volcanic deposits are usually shallow and poorly developed (DPR, 1989). The project site is underlain by soils developed from a granitic parent rock. The soils map from the Calaveras County General Plan (1996) describes the soils as coarse and moderately coarse soils with good drainage, developed on weathered granite. No evidence of expansive soils has been observed at the Park (Leivas, 1983).

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(1)Batholith: a large mass of igneous (formed from molten magma) rock with greater than 40 square miles of surface exposure and no known floor.

3 Jurassic to Cretaceous : the middle and late periods of the Mesozoic Era, ranging from 208 to 66 million years before present.

4 Roof pendants: a downward projection of country rock into an igneous intrusion. The country rock is the older sediments that were intruded by the magma and metamorphosed by the heat and pressure.

5 Paleozoic: One of the eras of geologic time, following the Precambrian and succeeding the Mesozoic, ranging in age from 570 to 245 million years ago.

6 Cenozoic: the most recent geologic era that contains the Tertiary and Quaternary periods, spanning the time from 66.4 million years ago to the present.

(6)Quaternary to Recent Alluvium & Colluvium: sand, gravel, silt, and clay deposited by rivers and streams in valley bottoms (alluvium) and as slope wash (colluvium) on hill slopes, ranging in age form 1.6 million years to present day..

Seismicity

There has been no known historic seismic activity at Calaveras Big Trees State Park (Leivas, 1983). No known active faults are present within the Park boundaries. The closest active faults are within the Foothills Fault system (Melones and Bear Mountains Fault Zones), located approximately 20 miles to the west. Portions of the Foothills Fault System have generated historic earthquakes and these segments are capable of producing earthquakes with magnitudes ranging from 6.3 to 6.7 (Petersen, et al, 1996). The Genoa Fault, located approximately 45 miles to the northeast near Markleeville is an active Holocene[8] Fault. The periodic earthquake activity since 1980 at Mammoth Lake (~ 85 miles to the southeast) has been felt in the Park. This activity occurs on the Hilton Creek Fault system. Both the Genoa and Hilton Creek faults are capable of generating an earthquake with a magnitude of 6.9 (Petersen, et al, 1996). Any seismic activity associated with any future eruption at Mammoth Lake would definitely be felt at the Park, although any damage to structures is likely to be minimal (Leivas, 1983).

Slope Stability

Landslide problems are not widespread within the Park. However, two slides located west of the Stanislaus River are recurring problems, and both have the potential for closing the road that provides access to the Stanislaus River and South Grove areas. These two slides (Big Slide and Small Slide) are reactivated portions of a larger, inactive ancient landslide (Leivas, 1983). Both of these slides appear to be related to road construction across the slide areas. The project site is on a gentle slope and has had no prior known slope stability issues.

WOULD THE PROJECT:	POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	NO IMPACT
a) Expose people or structures to potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:				
i) Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map, issued by the State Geologist for the area, or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault? (Refer to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42.)	☐	☐	☐	☒
ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?	☐	☐	☒	☐
iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?	☐	☐	☒	☐
iv) Landslides?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?	☐	☒	☐	☐
c) Be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable, as a result of the project and potentially result in on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence,	☐	☐	☒	☐

[8] Holocene: time period from 10,000 years to present.

	liquefaction, or collapse?				
d)	Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1997), creating substantial risks to life or property?	☐	☐	☐	☒
e)	Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative waste disposal systems, where sewers are not available for the disposal of waste water?	☐	☐	☒	☐
f)	Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site, or unique geologic feature?	☐	☐	☐	☒

DISCUSSION

a) The project site is located within an area of relatively low seismicity. The possibility of earthquake-induced effects such as surface rupture, strong ground shaking, or liquefaction and lateral spreading are low at this site. An earthquake on any of the above-mentioned faults would likely be felt at the project, but ground shaking would be minimal.

i) The project site is not located within an Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone (APEFZ) as designated by the California Geological Survey (CGS). Therefore, there is no risk of surface rupture as a result of this project.

ii) The California Geological Survey has determined that nearby faults are capable of generating earthquakes of Richter magnitude 6.3 to 6.9 (Petersen, et al, 1996). The expected ground acceleration at the project site is on the order of 0 to 0.2g (g = acceleration due to gravity) (Petersen, 1999). The new visitor center will be constructed following the guidelines in the California Building Code for Seismic Zone 3. Any damage to property and risk to the public will be minimal; therefore there is no impact from this project.

iii) Seismic-induced ground failure, such as liquefaction, usually occurs in unconsolidated granular soils that are water saturated. During seismic-induced ground shaking, pore water pressure can increase in loose soils, causing the soils to change from a solid to a liquid state (liquefaction). Based on the site soils, underlying bedrock, and the expected minimal ground shaking in the event of an earthquake, there is a low potential for any liquefaction or other seismic-related ground failure. Therefore, there is less than significant impact from this project.

iv) No known landslides have been mapped at the project site, which is located on a gentle slope underlain by some surficial soils and granitic bedrock. Drainage from the new building will be handled to prevent any slope failures caused by excess water runoff or infiltration (see **MITIGATION MEASURE HYDRO 1 – WATER RUNOFF**). Therefore, there is less than significant impact from a seismically triggered landslide.

b) A temporary increase in erosion may occur as a result of this project during grading for the building, expanded parking, new pathways/trails, trenching for utility lines, and any other

ground disturbing activities such as geotechnical investigations. Site soils do not have a high erosion potential, but when disturbed and when the protecting duff layer is removed, erosion could occur. Implementation of **MITIGATION MEASURE GEO-1** below will reduce soil erosion or loss of topsoil by the proposed project to a less than significant level

MITIGATION MEASURE GEO-1 – EROSION CONTROL

- A Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan will be developed outlining BMPs to be used in all areas to control soil and surface water runoff during construction activities (see Hydro 1). Grading and excavation activities will not be planned during the rainy season (October 31 to May 1), but if storms are anticipated during construction or if construction must occur during winter months, "winterizing" will occur, including the covering (tarping) of any stockpiled soils and the use of temporary erosion control methods to protect disturbed soil. Temporary erosion control measure BMPs will be used during all soil disturbing activities and until all disturbed soil has been stabilized (re-compacted, re-vegetated, etc.) These BMPs will include, but not be limited to, the use of silt fences, straw bales, or straw or rice coir rolls, to prevent soil loss and siltation into nearby water bodies, such as Big Tree Creek.
- Permanent BMPs for erosion control will consist of properly compacting disturbed areas and re-vegetation of appropriate disturbed soil areas with native species using seed collected locally, where possible. Otherwise, if local seed is not available, a weed-free native mixture will be used. Final design plans will include the permanent erosion control measures to be incorporated into the project.

c) The project is not located within a geologic unit or soil that is known to be unstable, based upon available data. With implementation of **MITIGATION MEASURE GEO 1** above, there will be a less than significant impact due to this project.

d) The project site is not underlain by expansive soils, as indicated by available regional data. If a site-specific geotechnical investigation is conducted, the soil properties will be re-evaluated for potential expansive soils. There will be no impact due to this project.

e) This project does not involve the installation of a leach field. The existing North Grove wastewater system (septic tank, pump, and leach field/spray field) is currently in use and is regulated under Waste Discharge Requirements (WDRs) Order No. 98-045. This project will tie into the existing North Grove system. An upgrade to the North Grove system with the installation of a new, larger leach field is planned to occur in 2005. The existing leachline for this system is located on a slope above Highway 4. Due to past failures, a collection ditch was constructed below it to capture any wastewater seeping from the system (Kranhold, 2003). The collection ditch allows for normal percolation of the wastewater seepage. Therefore, there will be no impacts to onsite soils from this project.

f) No known unique paleontological resource exists within the project site. Therefore, there is no impact

VII. HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The proposed project site at Calaveras Big Trees State Park (Park) was a giant sequoia grove with other associated conifers and was utilized by Native Americans for hunting, gathering and food processing (DPR, 1989). With the advent of European occupation, the giant sequoias were discovered in 1852 and the area became a recreational attraction. A historic hotel, built around 1854, was located adjacent to the visitor center site in the area currently occupied by the existing parking lot (DPR, 1989). There has been no industrial use or construction of buildings on the parcel that could have been a source of hazardous materials. The only potential hazardous materials are vehicle fuels contained at the Park's fuel storage facilities (DPR, 2003).

The project site is not located within an airport land use zone, or within two miles of an airport. There are no private airstrips in the vicinity of the Park. The closest school is Arnold High School, located approximately 1.5 miles to the northwest from the project site.

	POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	NO IMPACT
WOULD THE PROJECT:				
a) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?	☐	☒	☐	☐
b) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and/or accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials, substances, or waste into the environment?	☐	☒	☐	☐
c) Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?	☐	☐	☐	☒
d) Be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites, compiled pursuant to Government Code §65962.5, and, as a result, create a significant hazard to the public or environment?	☐	☐	☐	☒
e) Be located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport? If so, would the project result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area?	☐	☐	☐	☒
f) Be located in the vicinity of a private airstrip? If so, would the project result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area?	☐	☐	☐	☒
g) Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency	☐	☐	☒	☐

evacuation plan?

h) Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury, or death from wildland fires, including areas where wildlands are adjacent to urbanized areas or where residences are intermixed with wildlands?	☐	☒	☐	☐

DISCUSSION

a) Construction activities will require the use of certain potentially hazardous materials, such as fuels, oils, or other fluids associated with the operation and maintenance of vehicles and equipment. These materials are generally contained within vessels engineered for safe storage. Large quantities of these materials will not be stored at or transported to the construction site. Spills, upsets, or other construction-related accidents could result in a release of fuel or other hazardous substances into the environment. **MITIGATION MEASURE HAZMAT 1** below will reduce the potential for adverse impacts from these incidents to a less than significant level.

b) See discussion VII (a) above.

MITIGATION MEASURE HAZMAT 1 – SPILL PREVENTION

- All equipment will be inspected by the contractor for leaks immediately prior to the start of construction, and regularly inspected thereafter until equipment is removed from park premises.
- With DPR's review and approval, the contractor will prepare an emergency Spill Prevention and Response Plan prior to the start of construction and maintain a spill kit on-site throughout the life of the project. This plan will include a map that delineates construction staging areas, where refueling, lubrication, and maintenance of equipment could occur. Areas designated for refueling, lubrication, and maintenance of equipment will be at least 50 feet from any surface water body. In the event of any spill or release of any chemical in any physical form at the project site or within the boundaries of the Park during construction, the contractor will immediately notify the appropriate DPR staff (e.g., project manager, supervisor, or State Representative).
- Equipment will be cleaned and repaired (other than emergency repairs) outside the park boundaries. All contaminated water, sludge, spill residue, or other hazardous compounds will be disposed of outside park boundaries, at a lawfully permitted or authorized destination.

c) As noted in the Environmental Setting, there are no schools in the general vicinity of the project or within one-quarter mile of the proposed project site. Therefore, there will be no impact from this project.

d) No part of Calaveras Big Trees State Park is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code §65962.5. No area within the project site is

currently restricted or known to have hazardous materials present. Therefore, no impact will occur with project development.

e,f) Calaveras Big Trees State Park is not located within an airport land use plan, within two miles of a public airport, or in the vicinity of a private air strip. Therefore, no impact will occur as a result of this project.

g) All construction activities associated with the proposed project will occur within the boundaries of Calaveras Big Trees State Park and work will not restrict access to, cause delays, or block any public road outside the immediate construction area. Public access to the project site and surrounding area may be limited during construction. Minor delays may occur along Highway 4 during delivery of construction materials and structural components. However, minimum access requirements for emergency vehicles will be maintained at all times. Therefore, the impact of this project will be less than significant.

h) The project area is located within a forested zone that can become highly flammable during the dry season (June-October). Implementation of **MITIGATION MEASURE HAZMAT-2** below will reduce the potential for adverse construction impacts from this project to a less than significant level.

MITIGATION MEASURE HAZMAT- 2 CONSTRUCTION FIRE MANAGEMENT
• A fire safety plan will be developed by the contractor and approved by DPR prior to the start of construction. • Spark arrestors or turbo-charging (which eliminates sparks in exhaust) and fire extinguishers will be required for all heavy equipment. • Construction crews will be required to park vehicles away from flammable material, such as dry grass or brush. At the end of each workday, heavy equipment will be parked over mineral soil, asphalt, or concrete to reduce the chance of fire. • Fire suppression equipment will be available and located on park grounds.

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VIII. HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Watershed

Calaveras Big Trees State Park is located within the San Joaquin River Basin, Calaveras River Watershed (Hydro Unit 533) as designated by Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board (CVRWQCB). Big Tree Creek, located approximately 600 feet west of the project site is a tributary to Antonio Creek and ultimately to the South Fork of the Calaveras River. Big Tree Creek is a seasonal stream until it approaches the Park boundary at Highway 4; then a series of springs emerge that provide permanent flow (DPR, 2003). The Big Tree Creek watershed area is approximately 1,300 acres (DPR, 1989).

The Department of Water Resources (DWR) defines the area for groundwater purposes as the Eastern San Joaquin Valley Sub-basin within the San Joaquin River Hydrologic Region. The groundwater quality in the Park is of high quality due to lack of pollutant sources. Depth of groundwater fluctuates depending upon seasonal influences, topography, and geology (DPR, 2003).

Flooding

The project area is not prone to flooding from nearby Big Tree Creek. The available on-line FEMA maps do not delineate any 100-year flood plain adjacent to the project (ESRI-FEMA, 2004).

Water Quality

The CVRWQCB regulates water quality in the region and provides water quality standards and management criteria as required by the Clean Water Act. These standards and criteria are presented in the 1998 Water Quality Control Plan (Basin Plan) (CVRWQCB, 1998). The Basin Plan identifies the beneficial uses and water quality objectives for the Central Valley region. No beneficial uses are designated for Big Tree Creek or Antonio Creek, but there are beneficial uses listed for the Calaveras River, as shown in the table below. Those beneficial uses, which are applicable, also apply to any tributary streams

Beneficial Use	Calaveras River
Water Contact Recreation (REC 1)	X
Non-Contact Water Recreation (REC 2)	X
Wildlife Habitat (WILD)	X
Cold Fresh Water Habitat (COLD)	X
Warm Fresh Water Habitat (WARM)	X
Migration of Aquatic Organisms (MIGR)	X
Spawning, Reproduction and/or Early Development for Fish (SPWN)	X

Water Supply

The Calaveras County Water District supplies most of the Park's potable water. The water is pumped to a 100,000-gallon concrete reservoir near the group campground west of Highway 4 and then distributed by gravity flow. Local springs or groundwater wells supply other areas.

	POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	NO IMPACT
WOULD THE PROJECT:				
a) Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements?	☐	☒	☐	☐
b) Substantially deplete groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge, such that there would be a net deficit in aquifer volume or a lowering of the local groundwater table level (e.g., the production rate of pre-existing nearby wells would drop to a level that would not support existing land uses or planned uses for which permits have been granted)?	☐	☐	☒	☐
c) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through alteration of the course of a stream or river, in a manner which would result in substantial on- or off-site erosion or siltation?	☐	☒	☐	☐
d) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through alteration of the course of a stream or river, or substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in on- or off-site flooding?	☐	☒	☐	☐
e) Create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff?	☐	☒	☐	☐
f) Substantially degrade water quality?	☐	☒	☐	☐
g) Place housing within a 100-year flood hazard area, as mapped on a federal Flood Hazard Boundary or Flood Insurance Rate Map, or other flood hazard delineation map?	☐	☐	☐	☒
h) Place structures that would impede or redirect flood flows within a 100-year flood hazard area?	☐	☐	☐	☒
i) Expose people or structures to a significant risk of loss, injury, or death from flooding, including flooding resulting from the failure of a levee or dam?	☐	☐	☐	☒
j) Result in inundation by seiche, tsunami, or mudflow?	☐	☐	☐	☒

DISCUSSION

a) During any grading, excavating, utility trenching operations or other ground-disturbing activities, a release of sediment to surface waters could occur. Other impacts to water quality could result from releases of fuels or other fluids from vehicles and equipment during the construction process. These activities could result in a violation of water quality standards and waste discharge requirements. Implementation of **MITIGATION MEASURES HYDRO 1 AND GEO 1** will control releases of pollutants in storm (or other) water runoff. As

described in **MITIGATION MEASURE HAZMAT 1**, a plan to prevent, contain, and clean up any spills (Spill Prevention and Response Plan) will be used to mitigate for any impacts to water quality from vehicle fluids.

b) The project will not include a substantial increase in water usage and will not deplete any local aquifer. There is adequate water for the Park, supplied by the Calaveras County Water District. Therefore, there is a less than significant impact due to this project.

c) No existing drainages will be altered by this project. Any siltation impacts will be less than significant provided construction and post-construction BMPs to reduce sediment-laden runoff are implemented as specified in **MITIGATION MEASURE GEO 1**.

d) The drainage pattern will not be altered in a manner that will significantly increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner that will result in on- or off-site flooding. However, there will be an increase in impermeable surfaces (building footprint, expanded parking, new walkways). Implementation of **MITIGATION MEASURE HYDRO 1** below will reduce any impacts from on- or off-site flooding to less than significant.

e) This project will create additional runoff due an increase in impermeable surfaces, as discussed in item "d" above. Runoff water will not exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems, provided the new storm drainage system is designed to handle increased surface water runoff. No substantial additional sources of polluted runoff are expected from this project, provided soil erosion BMPs are followed, and a Spill Prevention and Response Plan is in place for vehicle fluid spills or other potentially hazardous materials. Implementation of **MITIGATION MEASURES HYDRO 1** below, **GEO 1, AND HAZMAT 1** will reduce this impact to less than significant.

Mitigation Measure Hydro 1 – Water Runoff

- The amount of increased runoff due to the new building, expanded paved parking lot, and pathways will be determined and an appropriately sized and designed stormwater drainage system will be installed to prevent any on- or off-site flooding.
- As part of the grading and landscaping design, surface water runoff will be directed as much as possible into existing or new stormwater drains, into a grassed or lined swale, or into other types of energy dissipation devices.
- A Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan, and associated erosion control plan, as required by the State Water Resources Control Board, will include BMPs for control of runoff and erosion.

f) This project has the potential to substantially degrade water quality if BMPs to control soil erosion and runoff or release of vehicle or equipment fluids are not in place during construction. Implementation of **MITIGATION MEASURES GEO 1 AND HAZMAT 1** will reduce this impact to less than significant.

g) This project is not located within a FEMA-designated 100-year floodplain area. Therefore, there is no impact from this project.

h) This project will not place structures that could impede or redirect flood flows within any FEMA-designated 100-Year floodplain. Therefore, there is no impact from this project.

i) The project will not expose people or structures to an increased significant risk of loss, injury, or death from flooding, including flooding resulting from the failure of a levee or dam. Therefore, there is no impact from this project.

j) While several landslides are present within the steeper areas of the Park, no mudflows or landslides are expected to occur at the project site due to the relatively gentle topography. The project is not located in an area that will be severely inundated by either a seiche or a tsunami. No impact.

IX. LAND USE AND PLANNING.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Calaveras Big Tree State Park is located approximately four miles northeast of the city of Arnold. The park is bisected by the North Fork Stanislaus River and straddles the Calaveras-Tuolumne county line. Approximately 40% of the 6,500 acres of the park are located in Calaveras County. This area is zoned as OS-R (Open Space/Recreation) within the county plans. The park's General Plan, the Calaveras County General Plan, and the regulations of various agencies guide development and uses within Calaveras Big Trees State Park with jurisdictions over the area in or immediately adjacent to the park. According to Public Resources Code, Section 5019.53, the purpose of land under the State Park classification is to preserve outstanding natural, scenic, and cultural values, and indigenous aquatic and terrestrial fauna and flora. The proposed project will construct a permanent, accessible Visitor Center within the park boundaries reflecting the goals and regulations of both the park and the county.

Tourism and recreation are among the county's primary economic areas of interest. The scenic and recreational attributes of Calaveras County make tourism and recreation industries an extremely valuable part of the county's economy, giving it a rural character that attracts both new residents and visitors. Improving the Calaveras County economy was identified as a major goal of the county's general plan to meet the needs of the growing population. The projected growth for 2010 is 57,532, an increase of 27% from the projections of 2000.

As a public recreation area, the development of permanent housing is not a planned use of the park. Residential opportunities are not offered at the park, with the exception of state employee residences. Non-commercial goals are also an element of the park's general plan.

	POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	NO IMPACT
WOULD THE PROJECT:				
a) Physically divide an established community?	☐	☐	☐	☒
b) Conflict with the applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation of any agency with jurisdiction over the project (including, but not limited to, a general plan, specific plan, local coastal program, or zoning ordinance) adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?	☐	☐	☐	☒
c) Conflict with any applicable habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan?	☐	☐	☐	☒

DISCUSSION

a) This project is located within the Calaveras Big Trees State Park. The project will add additional structures within the established boundaries of the park. There is no permanent community immediately surrounding the proposed area of potential effect. Therefore, the project will not divide an established community. No Impact.

b,c) This project is consistent with all applicable state and local land use plans, policies, and regulations. Work proposed for this project is in compliance with PRC §5002.2(c), and, with certification of this Mitigated Negative Declaration, will be in compliance with CEQA. The project is also in compliance with all conservation plans, policies, and ordinances that apply to the project and/or surrounding area. No impact.

X. MINERAL RESOURCES.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Areas of Calaveras County to the south and west of the Park have existing mines to extract sand and gravel, limestone, talc, and metals such as gold and chromite (Calaveras County GP, 1996). No significant mineral resources have been identified within the boundaries of the project area at Calaveras Big Trees State Park. If significant mineral resources were present, Public Resources Code 5001.65 prohibits the commercial exploitation of mineral resources in State Parks.

	POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	NO IMPACT
WOULD THE PROJECT:				
a) Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that is or would be of value to the region and the residents of the state?	☐	☐	☐	☒
b) Result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan, or other land use plan?	☐	☐	☐	☒

DISCUSSION

a) The Mineral Land Classification Program administered by the Department of Conservation, California Geological Survey (formerly Division of Mines and Geology) has identified no known mineral resources of local or regional importance at the project site. Therefore, no loss of availability of a known mineral resource will occur due to this project, and no impact will occur.

b) The project site is classified by the California Geological Survey as Mineral Resource Area 1: "*lands not known to contain significant mineral deposits*" (Calaveras County, 1996). Therefore no impact will occur as a result of this project.

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XI. NOISE.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Calaveras Big Trees SP is located in forested, moderately rugged terrain in Central California. The west side of the park is impacted by noise from State Highway 4, which has vehicle (including truck) traffic 24 hours a day. The park is bisected by the 9.5-mile W.W.Smith Parkway, which is a popular drive among Park visitors and provides access for fire-fighting equipment to the remote Skull Creek CDF Station. Other sources of noise include helicopter logging on property owned by Sierra Pacific Industries to the north, east, and south; recreational vehicle (RV) and car traffic in the campgrounds; and other very occasional air traffic, including small private planes and CDF firefighting aircraft.

Existing noise affecting the project area is primarily due to its close proximity to a portion of State Highway 4, and the vehicles of campground users.

	POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	NO IMPACT
WOULD THE PROJECT:				
a) Generate or expose people to noise levels in excess of standards established in a local general plan or noise ordinance, or in other applicable local, state, or federal standards?	☐	☒	☐	☐
b) Generate or expose people to excessive groundborne vibrations or groundborne noise levels?	☐	☐	☒	☐
c) Create a substantial permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project (above levels without the project)?	☐	☐	☐	☒
d) Create a substantial temporary or periodic increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project, in excess of noise levels existing without the project?	☐	☐	☒	☐
e) Be located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport? If so, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?	☐	☐	☐	☒
f) Be in the vicinity of a private airstrip? If so, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?	☐	☐	☐	☒

DISCUSSION

a) Construction noise levels at and near the project area will fluctuate, depending on the type and number of construction equipment operating at any given time, and will exceed ambient noise standards in the immediate vicinity of the work for brief periods of time. Campgrounds are located approximately 500 yards away from the project site and

residences are located across Highway 4, both sites a sufficient distance away from the project area to prevent an objectionable noise level. However, depending on the specific construction activities being performed, short-term increases in ambient noise levels could result in speech interference at the work site and a potential increase in annoyance to the closest visitors using park facilities in the vicinity. As a result, construction-generated noise will be considered to have a potentially significant short-term impact. Implementation **MITIGATION MEASURE NOISE –1** will reduce those potential impacts to a less than significant level.

MITIGATION MEASURE NOISE 1
• Construction activities will generally be limited to the daylight hours, Monday - Friday. If work during weekends or holidays is required, no work will occur on those days before 8:00 a.m. or after 5:00 p.m. • Internal combustion engines used for any purpose at the job site will be equipped with a muffler of a type recommended by the manufacturer. Equipment and trucks used for construction will utilize the best available noise control techniques (e.g., engine enclosures, acoustically-attenuating shields or shrouds, intake silencers, ducts, etc.) whenever feasible and necessary. • Stationary noise sources and staging areas will be located as far from sensitive receptors as possible. If they must be located near sensitive receptors, stationary noise sources will be muffled to the extent feasible and/or, where practicable, enclosed within temporary sheds.

b) Construction activity will not involve the use of explosives; pile driving, or other intensive construction techniques that could generate significant ground vibration or noise. Minor vibration immediately adjacent to excavating equipment will only be generated on a short-term basis. Therefore, groundborne vibration or noise generated by the project will have a less than significant impact.

c) Once the proposed project is completed, all related construction noise would disappear. Nothing within the scope of the proposed project will result in a substantial permanent increases in ambient noise levels. Therefore, no impact.

d) See Discussion XI(a) above. Mitigated to a less than significant impact.

e & f) This project is not located within an airport land use plan, within two miles of a public airport, or in the vicinity of a private airstrip. No impact.

XII. POPULATION AND HOUSING

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Calaveras Big Trees State Park is located in Calaveras County, just 4 miles northeast of Arnold. The park is open year round sunrise to sunset. Calaveras Big Trees offers its visitors many activities like camping, fishing, hiking, and guided tours. The park is made up of two groves of trees, the north and south grove. The two groves are approximately 6,500 acres combined. The general area is rural in nature, with a few small communities within twenty-five miles from the park. Arnold is the closest town from the park and has a population of only 4,218 people. From 1990 to year 2000, Calaveras County has only grown by 8,000 people, which indicates that growth in the area has been slow. The park contains one mobile residential unit that is occupied by a State Park employee; however, no housing is located within the project site and none are within view of the project.

	POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	NO IMPACT
WOULD THE PROJECT:				
a) Induce substantial population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)?	☐	☐	☐	☒
b) Displace substantial numbers of existing housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?	☐	☐	☐	☒
c) Displace substantial numbers of people, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?	☐	☐	☐	☒

DISCUSSION

a) The proposed project will consist of reconstruction of an existing facility and is designed to meet the needs of current visitors. The project will not have a housing component, and all work will take place within the park boundaries, with no changes or demands to the existing local foundation. Therefore, it will have no impact on population growth in the area.

b, c) As noted in (a) discussion above, the project will have no housing component and will neither modify or displace any existing housing nor displace anyone, either temporarily or permanently. No impact.

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XIII. PUBLIC SERVICES.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Calaveras Big Trees SP is located four miles northeast of Arnold on State Highway 4. The park contains two groves of trees: the North and South Grove, which make up the park's 6,500 acres. Calaveras Big Trees SP offers visitor camping, hiking, fishing, guided tours, and interpretive exhibits.

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF) provides fire protection for the area and maintains a fire station in Arnold. CDF also maintains a seasonal fire station located amidst the commercial timberlands about eight miles south of CBTSP at Skull Creek. Additionally, the CDF Air Attack base is located in Columbia, approximately 20 miles from CBTSP. Park Rangers patrol and inspect all designated fire roads during the fire season.

DPR Park Rangers are trained police officers and serve the public in that capacity within park boundaries. The California Highway Patrol (CHP) and the Calaveras County Sheriff's department, which has five substations within Calaveras County, assist Park Rangers with the protection of the park. The Calaveras County Sheriff's Search and Rescue Team works closely with the Ebbetts Pass Search and Rescue Team, which is responsible for wilderness search and rescue operations in the county.

There are no schools within the project site, and the closest school is Arnold High School, which is 1.5 miles from Calaveras Big Trees SP. Avery Middle School and Hazel Fischer Elementary School are the next closest schools, both within 3 miles of Calaveras Big Trees SP.

	POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	NO IMPACT
WOULD THE PROJECT:				
a) Result in significant environmental impacts from construction associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, or the need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, or other performance objectives for any of the public services:	☐	☐	☐	☒
Fire protection?	☐	☒	☐	☐
Police protection?	☐	☐	☐	☒
Schools?	☐	☐	☐	☒
Parks?	☐	☐	☐	☒
Other public facilities?	☐	☐	☐	☒

DISCUSSION

a) The proposed project will construct a new visitor center at the North Grove area of Calaveras Big Trees SP. Use of construction equipment around flammable annual vegetation presents an increased fire risk that could result in additional demands on CDF and local fire response teams. Any impact on these services will be temporary and nothing in the project scope will contribute to the need for an increase in the level of public service. Implementation of **MITIGATION MEASURE HAZMAT 2**, combined with the availability of on-site fire suppression equipment and support for State park Rangers, will reduce the potential impact to Fire Protection Services to a less than significant level.

State Park Rangers have full law enforcement authority and only require assistance from local sheriff or CHP as a backup for unusual situations. No additional demands on rangers, local sheriff, or CHP are expected as a result of this project. No impact on police protection.

No school sexist within or adjacent to the project area. No changes will occur that will affect existing schools or require additional schools or school personnel. No impact.

Only the proposed construction site will be closed to the public during construction. All other areas of the park will remain open. Calaveras Big Trees State Park is a destination park, and as such, has limited impact on park usage in adjacent communities. No other parks in the area surrounding areas will show an increase in use due to this project. No impact.

This project, as a whole, will have a less than significant effect on any public services.

XIV. RECREATION.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Calaveras Big Trees SP is one of the most visited units of the California State Park System, averaging over 150,000 visitors each year. This park was brought into the California State Park system in 1931 to preserve the North Grove of giant sequoias; however the park also features the primitive South Grove, a five-mile hiking trip through a spectacular grove of giant sequoias in their natural setting. Other visitor activities include hiking, camping, fishing, swimming, birding, and other forms of nature study. Also, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and snow play are available during the winter.

The proposed project site is located within the North Grove entrance to the park at State Highway 4.

	POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	NO IMPACT
WOULD THE PROJECT:				
a) Increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities, such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated?	☐	☐	☐	☒
b) Include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities that might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?	☐	☐	☒	☐

DISCUSSION

a) The proposed project site is located in the North Grove of the CBTSP. The new visitor center is unlikely to accelerate significant physical deterioration of surrounding areas. Replacing the existing visitor's center will produce a less than significant impact on the acceleration of physical deterioration of existing areas. No impact.

b) This project will enable the park to meet its mission to provide an informative orientation and entry to the park, enhanced educational and recreational guidance and access to interpretive displays and classroom, lecture programs. Increased use of the visitor center may result, however overall park visitation is not expected to increase. The facility will be designed to accommodate the current peak level use and will not significantly impact park resources. The project will replace the current visitor center and will not result in an adverse physical effect on the environment. Less than significant impact.

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XV. TRANSPORATION/TRAFFIC.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The proposed project site is located within the boundaries of Calaveras Big Trees SP, immediately off State Highway 4 (Hwy. 4), on the western slope of the Sierra Nevada mountain range. The park is approximately three miles east of the small town of Dorrington.

State Highway 4

Hwy. 4, or the Ebbetts Pass Scenic Highway, is the main regional traffic corridor for the southern portion of Calaveras County. The highway passes northeast to southwest through Calaveras Big Trees SP in the vicinity of North Grove and separates the main entrance, public attractions, and proposed project area from the maintenance and staff housing areas to the north. Hwy. 4 is primarily a two-lane, relatively steep, windy, asphalt-surfaced road that narrows considerably just east of the park boundary. Pullouts, turn lanes, and passing lanes occur intermittently from Angels Camp to the park (approximately 28 miles), but become less frequent beyond that point. There is a left turn lane at the park entrance (Walter W. Smith Memorial Parkway) for westbound traffic and a deceleration lane into the park entrance for eastbound vehicles. A left turn lane into the maintenance and the staff housing area also exists for eastbound travelers just past the main park entrance road. Signal lights are also present along the highway in small towns from Angels Camp to Arnold, but there are none further east or in the vicinity of the park. Access to the project site is via Highway 4, through the Park entrance station and into the nearby North Grove Day Use parking area.

A 58-mile portion of Hwy. 4 between Arnold and Markleeville, including the section that runs through the park, has been designated a California State Scenic Highway and has been nominated for National Scenic Byway status. Hwy. 4 through the park is generally open year-round, although it may experience temporary closures during the winter months for snow removal or during severe weather conditions. Caltrans provides snow removal on Hwy. 4 from the snowline (generally 3,000-4,000 feet) to Bear Valley, about 28 miles east of the park. The road is closed during the winter months east of Bear Valley. The project area is not directly on Hwy. 4, but is briefly visible through the trees.

Hwy. 4 is a state highway of regional importance (Caltrans designation) and minor arterial road (Calaveras County General Plan designation). The level of service (LOS) rating for Hwy. 4, in the vicinity of Calaveras Big Trees SP, is LOS-C. This refers to the ease with which traffic flows along the road at a constant speed. LOS-C denotes a stable flow of traffic, with speed and maneuverability restricted by higher traffic volumes. In 2002, traffic averaged 3800-4000 vehicles per day at the Calaveras Big Trees SP traffic monitoring point (post mile 44.5). However, traffic is seasonal, with peak hourly counts of up to 920 vehicles and up to 5600 vehicles daily during the summer months. Truck traffic on Hwy. 4, within park boundaries, averages 260 trucks daily, approximately seven percent of total vehicle traffic. Truck traffic count excludes pickups and vans with only four tires. There are no access restrictions on trucks, buses, or motorhomes (up to 45 feet in length) until east of Bear Valley.

Walter W. Smith Memorial Parkway

The Walter W. Smith Memorial Parkway (Parkway) is the primary route for public vehicle access into Calaveras Big Trees SP, extending from Hwy. 4 along the northern edge of the North Grove across the Stanislaus River to Beaver Creek approximately nine miles away. It is a two-lane, asphalt-surfaced road with occasional turnouts and access to trailheads, campgrounds, and viewing areas. The road is open year-round, but is occasionally impassible beyond the North Grove parking area during the winter months, due to snow and hazardous driving conditions. Visitors to the proposed visitor center will enter the park on the Parkway, then turn into the North Grove parking area just beyond the park entrance station. The Parkway is owned and maintained by California State Parks.

Public Transit and Alternative Transportation

There is no bus service, rail lines, or other means of public transit to Calaveras Big Trees SP. Bus traffic at the park is limited to charter service and school buses transporting students on field trips. There are no airports, public or private, within two miles of the project site and is not within an airport land use area.

Parking

The existing parking lot adjacent to the proposed visitor center has a 79-vehicle capacity.

	POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	NO IMPACT
WOULD THE PROJECT:				
a) Cause a substantial increase in traffic, in relation to existing traffic and the capacity of the street system (i.e., a substantial increase in either the number of vehicle trips, the volume to capacity ratio on roads, or congestion at intersections)?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b) Exceed, individually or cumulatively, the level of service standards established by the county congestion management agency for designated roads or highways?	☐	☐	☒	☐
c) Cause a change in air traffic patterns, including either an increase in traffic levels or a change in location, that results in substantial safety risks?	☐	☐	☐	☒
d) Contain a design feature (e.g., sharp curves or a dangerous intersection) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment) that would substantially increase hazards?	☐	☐	☐	☒
e) Result in inadequate emergency access?	☐	☐	☒	☐
f) Result in inadequate parking capacity?	☐	☐	☒	☐
g) Conflict with adopted policies, plans, or programs supporting alternative transportation (e.g., bus turnouts, bicycle racks)?	☐	☐	☐	☒

DISCUSSION

a) All construction activities associated with the project will occur within the boundaries of Calaveras Big Trees SP. Hwy. 4 is the primary publicly owned access road leading to the project site, with a turn onto the Parkway to enter the park. As noted in the Environmental Setting above, Hwy. 4 experiences traffic volumes of up to 5,800 vehicles daily during the summer season when construction will occur. The addition of approximately 10-20 additional vehicles (crew pickups, delivery trucks, and equipment haulers) making minimal trips daily will not constitute a substantial increase in traffic volume for this road or result in additional congestion. There is both a left turn lane for westbound traffic and deceleration lane for eastbound vehicles entering the park. In addition, work crews and equipment will typically arrive or leave the site outside the normal periods of increased visitor traffic entering or leaving the park. Less than significant impact.

b) As noted in Discussion XV(a) above, additional vehicle trips as a result of the proposed project will add minimal daily vehicle trips to Hwy. 4, which is rated LOS-C. The addition of this limited number of vehicle trips will not exceed, individually or cumulatively, the LOS standards for this roadway. Less than significant impact.

c) The project sites are not located within an airport land use plan, within two miles of a public airport, in the vicinity of a private air strip, and do not serve as a normal reporting point for air traffic in the area. Nothing in the proposed project will in any way affect or change existing air traffic patterns; therefore, no impact will occur as a result of this project.

d) The project does not contain a design feature or incompatible uses that will substantially increase traffic hazards. The existing park encroachment from the Parkway onto Hwy. 4 provides safe entry and exit, with adequate line of sight for departing visitors. It is adequate for the anticipated modest increase in visitor traffic and will not be altered as part of this project. No impact.

e) The project site and primary staging areas will be located within and adjacent to the existing North Grove Day Use Parking area and will not block or interfere with the normal flow of traffic on Hwy. 4 or any access road within the park. Only a portion of the parking area will be utilized, allowing continued access to both construction and day use areas in case of an emergency. Less than significant impact.

f) The existing North Grove Day Use Parking area will be modified to provide 79 standard vehicle spaces; four ADA-compliant spaces, one of which will be van-accessible; and three bus parking spaces. This parking area will serve as one of the project staging areas and will be partially closed during construction Above it says only a portion of the parking are would be utilized. The project is expected to result in an additional 5000 visitors per year, spread primarily over the summer months. Less than significant impact.

g) There are no adopted policies, plans, or programs supporting alternative transportation in this area of the county, other than countywide recommendations to support the use of public transportation where available and provide widened road shoulders and/or bicycle lanes where feasible. Neither is applicable to this project. However, bicycles are often

used on park roads and distance riders may choose to stop at the Visitor Center to visit or when camping in the park. In addition, although there are no regular public transit routes to and from the park, charter buses bring tour groups and school buses bring students to the park on a regular basis. The new facility will have parking for three buses and a drop-off point at the building entrance for loading and unloading of visitors. No adverse impact.

XVI. UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Calaveras Big Trees SP is serviced by several public utilities, with internal collection and distribution systems generally owned and/or maintained by park maintenance staff. Pacific Gas and Electric Company provides electricity to the park; propane gas is delivered to various-sized domestic tanks by any one of several local mobile distribution companies; and SBC provides commercial telecommunications. A local waste management company provides solid waste disposal services. Surface water is supplied to the project area by precipitation, runoff during storm events, and snowmelt. Most potable water is supplied to the park by the Calaveras County Water District, where it is pumped to a 100,000-gallon concrete reservoir near the group campground west of Highway 4 and then distributed by gravity flow to park facilities. Water for the proposed visitor center and grounds will come from this source. Local springs or groundwater wells supply other areas. .

DPR owns and operates its own wastewater disposal system, which includes a 20,000-gallon septic tank; leach field, spray field, and distribution mains from core-area buildings and the North Grove Campground. The existing leach field is marginally sufficient to support heavy summer demands and is scheduled to be replaced in 2005.

	POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	NO IMPACT
WOULD THE PROJECT:				
a) Exceed wastewater treatment restrictions or standards of the applicable Regional Water Quality Control Board?	☐	☐	☐	☒
b) Require or result in the construction of new water or wastewater treatment facilities or expansion of existing facilities?	☐ Yes	☒ No		
Would the construction of these facilities cause significant environmental effects?	☐	☒	☐	☐
c) Require or result in the construction of new storm water drainage facilities or expansion of existing facilities?	☐ Yes	☒ No		
Would the construction of these facilities cause significant environmental effects?	☐	☐	☒	☐
d) Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project from existing entitlements and resources or are new or expanded entitlements needed?	☐	☐	☒	☐
e) Result in a determination, by the wastewater treatment provider that serves or may serve the project, that it has adequate capacity to service the project's anticipated demand, in addition to the provider's existing commitments?	☐	☐	☒	☐

f)	Be served by a landfill with sufficient permitted capacity to accommodate the project's solid waste disposal needs?	☐	☐	☒	☐
g)	Comply with federal, state, and local statutes and regulations as they relate to solid waste?	☐	☐	☐	☒

DISCUSSION

a) Calaveras Big Trees SP is within the jurisdiction of the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control District. The project will be in compliance with all applicable water quality standards and waste discharge requirements. (See **MITIGATION MEASURE HAZMAT 1** regarding potential impacts from accidents, spills, or upset.). No impact.

b) The existing septic system has marginally sufficient leach field capacity to service the proposed visitor center complex. However, construction of a new leach field is already planned to occur prior to or concurrently with this project and will be on-line before the visitor center is opened to the public. Leach field construction is a separate project, designed to improve service capacity for all core facilities and the North Grove Campground, not just the proposed Visitor Center, and is not segmenting of this project. The project will be subject to complete environmental review under CEQA, prior to implementation, and any potentially significant environmental impacts related to leach field construction would be mitigated to a less than significant impact. Connecting to the existing wastewater treatment system will require the addition of a new manhole, approximately 150 feet to the west of the proposed visitor center. Compliance with all local and regional permit and approval requirements, in conjunction with **MITIGATION MEASURES GEO 1 and HYDRO-1**, will reduce any potential impacts to a less than significant level.

c) The existing North Grove Day Use Parking area, with minor alterations, will serve the proposed visitor center and upgrades to the existing stormwater drainage facilities will be implemented to accommodate seasonal demands. Stormwater dispersion will be incorporated into and facilitated by building and grounds design and will supplement and prevent overload of the existing system (see VIII Discussion (d) and (e), and **HYDRO-1**). Soils in the vicinity of the project are generally permeable, with good drainage (see Geology and Soils Section). Less than significant impact.

d) Potable water for the proposed visitor center will be supplied by Calaveras County Water District, which is pumped to a 100,000-gallon concrete reservoir with park boundaries and distributed via an existing 3-inch water main, located approximately 120 feet east of the proposed building site. Existing entitlement is sufficient to accommodate construction needs and the modest increase in water usage anticipated once the facility is fully operational. Less than significant impact.

e) Wastewater treatment for this project will be provided by an existing DPR-owned and operated septic system (see XVI Discussion (b) above), which will have adequate capacity to serve the operational visitor center once the new leach field is installed. Existing sanitary facilities are sufficient to serve construction crews and, if additional facilities are needed, temporary portable toilet facilities will be installed at the job site and serviced regularly by a

local licensed supplier. Less than significant impact.

f) As noted in the Environmental Setting above, solid waste (refuse) from the project site will be disposed of at the Avery Transfer Station on Seagale Road, approximately twelve miles away. Disposal requirements for the facilities will only increase slightly over existing levels during and following construction and will result in an insignificant increase in total processed tonnage. The Avery Transfer Station is not at or near capacity. Less than significant impact.

g) See Discussion XVI(f) above. The proposed work does not have a solid waste component, although some solid waste will be generated during construction. Once the facility is in operation, waste will be disposed of as required by Calaveras County and other applicable state and local regulations. Therefore, no impact will result from this project.

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CHAPTER 4
MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE

	POTENTIALLY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION	LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT IMPACT	NO IMPACT
WOULD THE PROJECT:				
a) Does the project have the potential to degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal?	☐	☒	☐	☐
b) Have the potential to eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?	☐	☒	☐	☐
c) Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? ("Cumulatively considerable" means the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, other current projects, and probably future projects?)	☐	☐	☒	☐
d) Have environmental effects that will cause substantial adverse effects on humans, either directly or indirectly?	☐	☒	☐	☐

DISCUSSION

a) The proposed project was evaluated for potential significant adverse impacts to the natural environment and its plant and animal communities. The project site supports special status species. DPR Resource Ecologists have determined that the project could have the potential to disturb northern goshawks and northern spotted owls nesting in the vicinity. However, full implementation of all mitigation measures incorporated into this project will reduce impacts, both individually and cumulatively, to a less than significant level.

b) The proposed project was evaluated for potential significant adverse impacts to the cultural resources of Calaveras Big Trees SP and its immediate environs. It has been determined that activities associated with the proposed project could have the potential to significantly disturb archaeological resources. The proposed utility improvements involve below ground trenching in the immediate vicinity of an archaeological site. However, full implementation of all mitigation measures incorporated into this project will reduce those impacts, both individually and cumulatively, to a less than significant level.

c) DPR often has smaller maintenance programs and rehabilitation projects planned for a park unit. Additional projects planned for this park include converting the existing visitor center to administrative uses and constructing a leach field. However, impacts from environmental

issues addressed in this evaluation do not overlap with these additional projects in such a way as to result in cumulative impacts that are greater than the sum of parts or that result in a significant adverse impact that cannot be mitigated. Full implementation of all mitigation measures associated with this project will reduce any potential cumulative impact to a less than significant level.

d) Most project-related environmental effects have been determined to pose a less than significant impact on humans. However, possible impacts from construction emissions (Air Quality), construction accidents, seismic events, and fire (Hazards and Hazardous Wastes), and noise, though temporary in nature, have the potential to result in significant adverse effects on humans. These potentially significant adverse impacts will be reduced to a less than significant level if all mitigation measures incorporated into this project are fully implemented.

CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY OF MITIGATION MEASURES

The following mitigation measures shall be implemented by DPR as part of the Calaveras Big Trees Visitor Center Construction Project.

Air Quality

MITIGATION MEASURES AIR-1

- All active construction areas will be watered at least twice daily during dry, dusty conditions. Any activities that cause visible dust plumes that cannot be controlled by watering will be suspended
- All trucks hauling soil, sand, or other loose materials on public roads will be covered or required to maintain at least two feet of freeboard.
- All gasoline-powered equipment will be maintained in good mechanical condition (according to manufacture's specifications), and in compliance with all State and federal requirements.
- Excavation and grading activities will be suspended when sustained winds exceed 15 mph, instantaneous gusts exceed 25 mph, or dust from construction might obscure driver visibility on public roads.
- Disturbed areas will be re-vegetated as quickly as feasible following completion of construction.
- Earth or other material that has been transported by trucking or earth moving equipment, erosion by water, or other means onto paved streets will be promptly removed.

Biological Resources

MITIGATION MEASURES BIO-1 – NEST PROTECTION FOR SPOTTED OWL AND NORTHERN GOSHAWK

- A DPR-qualified resource ecologist will conduct surveys for nests of spotted owl and northern goshawk to identify active nests within 0.25 miles of the project area. The surveys will be conducted during each breeding season beginning in 2004 and continued for each year of the construction period. The surveys will follow protocols approved by the California Department of Fish and Game.
- In the event that nesting spotted owls are found in the vicinity of the project area, an appropriate buffer zone with activity restrictions will be established, in consultation with DFG. Restrictions will remain in place from February 1 to August 31.
- In the event that nesting northern goshawks are found in the vicinity of the project area, an appropriate buffer zone with activity restrictions will be established, in consultation with DFG. Restrictions will remain in place from March 15 to August 31.

MITIGATION MEASURES BIO-2 – WILDLIFE TREE RETENTION

- A DPR Resource Ecologist will identify wildlife trees on the project site during initial

planning. Trees in the active construction zone will be identified with flagging and protected if necessary with fencing or weed-free straw bales. Any such tree scheduled for removal will be felled between August and April to avoid the breeding season, and left on site, if possible, to function as coarse woody debris.

MITIGATION MEASURES BIO-3 – TREE PROTECTION MEASURES

- Prior to construction, trees selected for retention will be identified, and all areas of ground disturbance will be flagged on the ground and inspected by a DPR Ecologist for potential impacts to roots, trunks and limbs
- Ground disturbing activities that will impact trees, as determined by the DPR Ecologist, will be conducted at a depth and location to avoid structural tree roots (roots > 1.5" diameter). If tree roots >1.5" diameter are encountered, then contractor will excavate by hand underneath tree roots. Alternatively, boring or trenching will go at least three feet deep to avoid mature tree roots
- DPR will replace, at a ratio of 1 per inch of diameter at breast height, all trees designated for removal
- In the event that construction work takes place next to mature retention trees, these will be protected by the contractor with safety fencing and/or certified weed-free straw bales to prevent damage to roots, trunk, and limbs
- In the event that retention trees must be removed due to damage based on an evaluation by a DPR Resource Ecologist, then the contractor will mitigate at a ratio of 1 seedling per inch of dbh for each retention tree removed as directed by a DPR Resource Ecologist.

Cultural Resources

MITIGATION MEASURE CULT 2 – PRECONSTRUCTION TESTING

- In those areas of the APE where project redesign is impossible and ground disturbances are unavoidable, a pre-construction archaeological testing program will be implemented to determine if archaeological deposits exist below the surface. The data generated from this investigation will determine if a data recovery or archaeological monitoring will be implemented.
- If archaeological monitoring is determined to be necessary during ground-disturbing activities, the work will be conducted by and at the discretion of the DPR archaeologist assigned to the project. The archaeological monitor will be notified a minimum of two weeks prior to the start of ground-disturbing work to schedule monitoring, unless other arrangements are been made in advance.
- A report of the findings from the testing, data recovery, or monitoring will be completed and copies distributed to the Cultural Resource Division, California State Park Headquarters; the DPR Northern Service Center; and the Central Valley District.

MITIGATION MEASURE CULT 3 – MONITORING

- In the event that previously unknown cultural resources (including but not limited to dark soil containing shellfish, bone, flaked stone, groundstone, or deposits of historic trash) are encountered during project construction by anyone, the state representative will put work

on hold at that specific location and contractors will be redirected to other tasks. A DPR-qualified archaeologist will record and evaluate the find and work with state representative to implement avoidance, preservation, or recovery measures as appropriate prior to any work resuming at that specific location.

- In the event that significant cultural resources are found in a project location, a qualified historian, archaeologist, and/or Native American representative (if appropriate) will monitor all subsurface work including trenching, grading, and excavations in that area from that point forward to ensure avoidance of significant impacts to cultural resources.

MITIGATION MEASURE CULT- 4 – BURIAL SITES

- In the event that human remains are discovered, work will cease immediately in the area of the find and the project manager/site supervisor will notify the appropriate DPR personnel. Any human remains and/or funerary objects will be left in place or returned to the point of discovery and covered with soil. The DPR Sector Superintendent (or authorized representative) will notify the County Coroner, in accordance with §7050.5 of the California Health and Safety Code, and the Native American Heritage Commission (or Tribal Representative). If a Native American monitor is on-site at the time of the discovery, the monitor will be responsible for notifying the appropriate Native American authorities.

  The local County Coroner will make the determination of whether the human bone is of Native American origin. In many of California's historic townsites and rural communities discoveries have been made of non-Native American human bone including non-Anglo.

  If the coroner or tribal representative determines the remains represent Native American interment, the NAHC in Sacramento and/or tribe will be consulted to identify the most likely descendants and appropriate disposition of the remains. Work will not resume in the area of the find until proper disposition is complete (PRC §5097.98). No human remains or funerary objects will be cleaned, photographed, analyzed, or removed from the site prior to determination

  If it is determined the find indicates a sacred or religious site, the site will be avoided to the maximum extent practicable. Formal consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office and review by the Native American Heritage Commission/Tribal Cultural representatives will also occur as necessary to define additional site mitigation or future restrictions.

Geology and Soils

MITIGATION MEASURES GEO-1 – EROSION CONTROL

- A Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan will be developed outlining BMPs to be used in all areas to control soil and surface water runoff during construction activities (see Hydro 1). Grading and excavation activities will not be planned during the rainy season (October 31 to May 1), but if storms are anticipated during construction or if construction will occur during winter months, “winterizing” will occur, including the covering (tarping) of any stockpiled soils and the use of temporary erosion control methods to protect disturbed soil. Temporary erosion control measures (BMPs) will be used during all soil disturbing activities and until all disturbed soil has been stabilized (recompacted, re-

vegetated, etc.) These BMPs will include, but not be limited to, the use of silt fences, straw bales, or straw or rice coir rolls, to prevent soil loss and siltation into nearby water bodies, such as Big Tree Creek.

- Permanent BMPs for erosion control will consist of properly compacting disturbed areas and revegetation of appropriate disturbed soil areas with native species using seed collected locally, where possible. Otherwise, if local seed is not available, a weed-free native mixture will be used. Final design plans will include the permanent erosion control measures to be incorporated into the project.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials

MITIGATION MEASURES HAZMAT-1 – SPILL PREVENTION

- All equipment will be inspected by the contractor for leaks immediately prior to the start of construction, and regularly inspected thereafter until equipment is removed from park premises.
- The contractor(s) and/or DPR will prepare an emergency Spill Prevention and Response Plan prior to the start of construction and maintain a spill kit on-site throughout the life of the project. This plan will include a map that delineates construction staging areas, where refueling, lubrication, and maintenance of equipment may occur. Areas designated for refueling, lubrication, and maintenance of equipment will be at least 50 feet from any surface water body. In the event of any spill or release of any chemical in any physical form at the project site or within the boundaries of the Park during construction, the contractor will immediately notify the appropriate DPR staff (e.g., project manager, supervisor, or State Representative).
- Equipment will be cleaned and repaired (other than emergency repairs) outside the park boundaries. All contaminated water, sludge, spill residue, or other hazardous compounds will be disposed of outside park boundaries, at a lawfully permitted or authorized destination.

MITIGATION MEASURES HAZMAT-2 – CONSTRUCTION FIRE MANAGEMENT

- A fire safety plan will be developed by the contractor and approved by DPR prior to the start of construction.
- Spark arrestors or turbo-charging (which eliminates sparks in exhaust) and fire extinguishers will be required for all heavy equipment.
- Construction crews will be required to park vehicles away from flammable material, such as dry grass or brush. At the end of each workday, heavy equipment will be parked over mineral soil, asphalt, or concrete to reduce the chance of fire.
- Fire suppression equipment will also be available and located on park grounds.

Hydrology and Water Quality

MITIGATION MEASURE HYDRO 1 – WATER RUNOFF

- The amount of increased runoff due to the new building, expanded paved parking lot, and pathways will be determined and an appropriately sized and designed stormwater drainage

system will be installed to prevent any on- or off-site flooding.

- As part of the grading and landscaping design, surface water runoff will be directed as much as possible into existing or new stormwater drains, into a grassed or lined swale, or into other types of energy dissipation devices.
- A Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan, and associated erosion control plan, as required by the State Water Resources Control Board, will include BMPs for control of runoff and erosion.

Noise

MITIGATION MEASURES NOISE-1

- Construction activities will generally be limited to the daylight hours, Monday - Friday. If work during weekends or holidays is required, no work will occur on those days before 8:00 a.m. or after 5:00 p.m.
- Internal combustion engines used for any purpose at the job site will be equipped with a muffler of a type recommended by the manufacturer. Equipment and trucks used for construction will utilize the best available noise control techniques (e.g., engine enclosures, acoustically-attenuating shields or shrouds, intake silencers, ducts, etc.) whenever feasible and necessary.
- Stationary noise sources and staging areas will be located as far from sensitive receptors as possible. If they must be located near sensitive receptors, stationary noise sources will be muffled to the extent feasible and/or, where practicable, enclosed within temporary sheds.

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CHAPTER 7
REPORT PREPARATION

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APPENDIX A
MAPS, TABLES, AND CHARTS

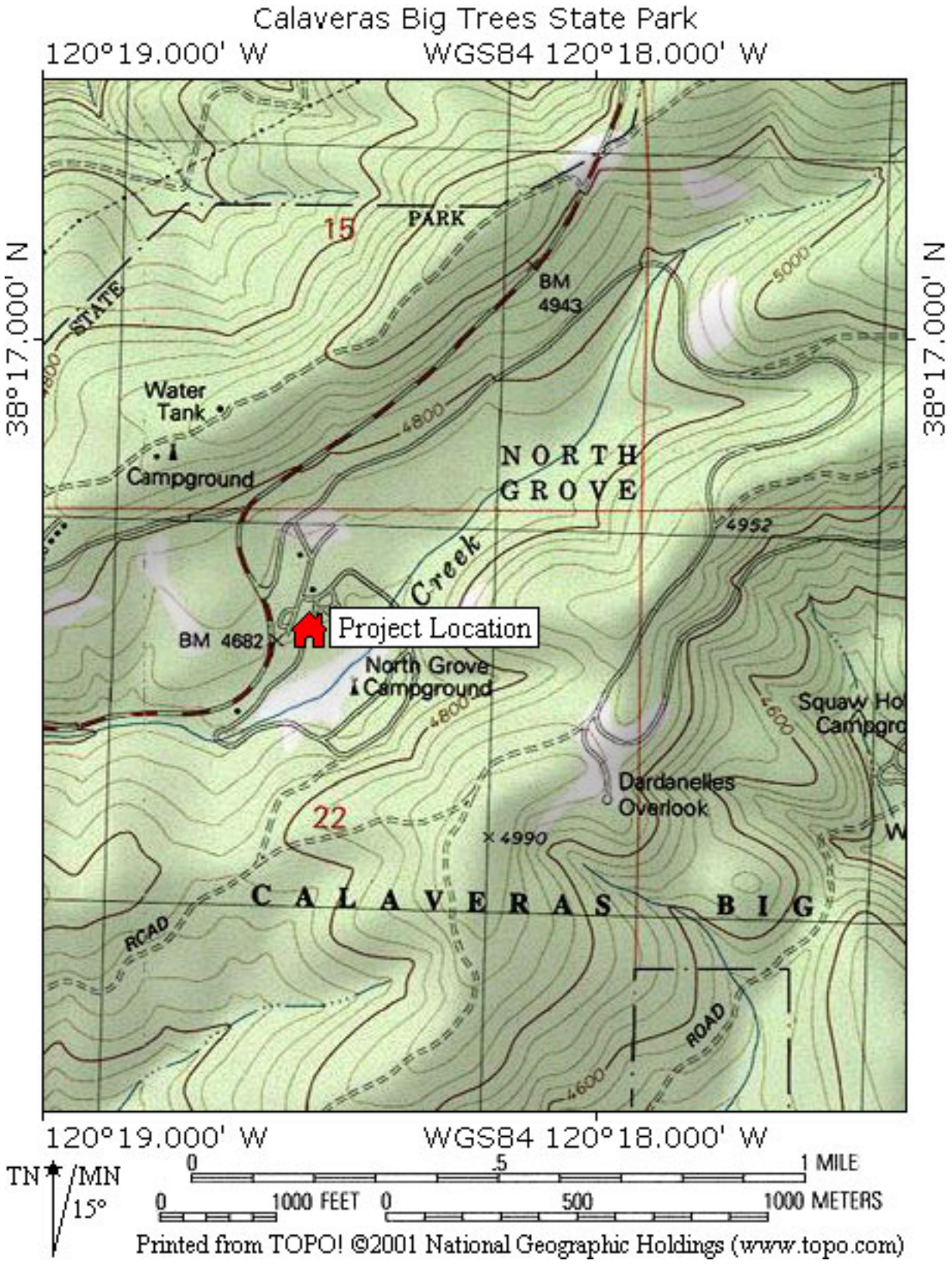

Figure G-1 Topographic Map


COMFORT STATION
WARMING HUT
PARKING LOT
KIOSK AREA
TRAILHEAD ASSEMBLY AREA
PROPOSED VISITOR CENTER
EXISTING CAMPFIRE CENTER
PARKS OFFICE
EXISTING NORTH TRAILHEAD ASSEMBLY AREA
TREES MASSING
TREE OUTLINES SHOWN ONLY TO ALLOW VIEW OF SITE FEATURE BELOW
TREE TO BE REMOVED
N
NEW VISITOR CENTER
CALAVERAS BIG TREES STATE PARK
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APPENDIX B

PROJECT DESIGN GRAPHICS

APPENDIX C

ACRONYMS

APPENDIX C
LIST OF ACRONYMS

AAQS	Ambient Air Quality Standards
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
AKA	also known as
APE	Area of Potential Effect
APEFZ	Alquist–Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone
BMP	Best Management Practice
Cal Trans	California Department of Transportation
CARB	California Air Resources Board
CBTSP	Calaveras Big Trees State Park
CBT	Calaveras Big Trees
CCAPCD	Calaveras County Air Pollution Control District
CC	Conservation Corps
CCC	Civilian Conservation Corps
CCR	California Code of Regulations
CDF	California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
CDFG	California Department of Fish and Game
CEQA	California Environmental Quality Act
CGS	California Geological Society
CHP	California Highway Patrol
CNDDB	California Natural Diversity Database
CNPS	California Native Plant Society
CVRWQCB	Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board
DOT	Department of Transportation
DPR	California Department of Parks and Recreation
DWR	Department of Water Resources
EIR	Environmental Impact Report
ES	Environmental Setting
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FMMP	Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program
GP	General Plan
HWY	Highway
IS/MND	Initial Study/Mitigated negative Declaration
LOS	Level of Use
Mph	miles per hour
NAHC	Native American Heritage Commission
NOx	Nitrogen Oxide
NRHP	National Register of Historic Places
PG&E	Pacific Gas & Electric
PRC	Public Resources Code
PM10	Particulate Matter with an aerodynamic diameter of 10 microns or less
ROG	reactive organic gases
RV	Recreational Vehicle
RWQCD	Regional Water Quality Control District

SHPO	State Historic Preservation Office
SP	State Park
USACE	United States Army Corps of Engineers
USEPA	United States Environmental Protection Agency
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service
USGS	United States Geologic Society
VRP	visibility-reducing particles
WDR	Waste Discharge Requirements